

Book Review

Trauma-Informed Music Therapy: Theory and Practice

Laura E. Beer and Jacqueline C. Birnbaum (Editors)

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At the time of writing this review, the last book about music therapy and trauma was published in 2013. Moreover, considering recent global tragedies, such as the deadly flooding in Pakistan, the war in Ukraine, and the COVID-19 pandemic, *Trauma-Informed Music Therapy: Theory and Practice*, edited by Laura Beer and Jacqueline Birnbaum, is a much-needed addition to the present catalogue of literature on music therapy and trauma. Previous books on the topic have mostly presented case studies, with some exposition of their underlying theories (Birnbaum, 2013; Bruscia, 2012; Stewart, 2010; Sutton, 2002). This book stands out for its aim of providing multiple theoretical perspectives on how trauma-informed practice (TIP) can be incorporated into music therapy clinical practice. This volume features authors who come from diverse cultural backgrounds, have varied experiences with trauma, and use different clinical approaches. The diversity of voices and clinical insights position this book as an invaluable resource to both experienced and early-career music therapists interested in applying TIP principles to their clinical work.

The book contains 16 chapters that are divided across three main parts. Chapters are loosely structured, allowing authors to present their ideas in a manner suited to their topic. While this might make the book less cohesive as a whole, it means that each chapter stands on its own and readers need not read the entire book sequentially to understand its content. If one is strapped for time, readers could navigate to their topic of interest using the contents page or the chapter-specific DOI. In general, most chapters contain three sections: a theoretical framework or background information, case examples or clinical vignettes, and recommendations for clinical practice.

Jennifer Sokira, Joy Allen, and Heather Wagner start off the first part, "Theories and Perspectives," by delineating a broad conceptual understanding of trauma and introducing the resilience framework as a guide for TIP in music therapy. Barbara Else and Mireya González present psychological first aid as another perspective within the context of natural disasters and global crises. Jasmine Edwards offers a cultural perspective, highlighting cultural humility as an imperative within trauma-informed music therapy. Elly Scrine and Asami Koike critique the prevailing trauma paradigm and challenge us to reconsider safety as a relational practice that requires continuous negotiation and co-construction. Overall, this part offers valuable insights into what is and how to practise trauma-informed music therapy from different theoretical perspectives. I found the chapters by Edwards as well as Scrine and Koike to be especially relevant, given broader contemporary discourse surrounding social justice (Leonard, 2020) and anti-oppressive music therapy (Baines, 2021). My biggest takeaway from this part is that cultural humility and "structuring safety" (p. 42) are vitally important to trauma-informed music therapy practice.

The second part of the book takes a deeper dive into several trauma contexts experienced by "Children and Adolescents." Olivia Yinger introduces readers to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and offers practical strategies when working with children who have experienced trauma. She suggests Perry's sequence of engagement (regulate, relate, reason) and child-directed musical play using PRIDE skills (praise, reflect, imitate, describe, enthusiasm). Stephanie Holly presents a practical application of cultural humility by describing how therapeutic songwriting can be especially valuable for adolescents dealing with race-based traumatic stress. Cindybet Pérez-Martínez expands on Else and González's chapter and shares music therapy interventions that can be used with children who have experienced trauma due to a natural disaster. Tracie Sandheinrich and Jaime Kennington closes this part by exploring how therapeutic songwriting can be used with children within the context of traumatic and life-threatening illnesses, such as cancer. This part offers practical suggestions for TIP in music therapy with children and adolescents. I particularly appreciated Yinger's

analysis from a developmental systems perspective because it reminds us not to quickly assume that all children are weak and vulnerable, but to recognize each individual's unique capacities and strengths.

The third part of the book covers trauma contexts experienced by "Adults." Rachel Ebeling and Sarah Michaelis write about The Angel Band Project that works with survivors of sexual violence/intimate partner violence. Nadine Cadesky describes music therapy groupwork in short-term inpatient psychiatric care and recovery. Gillian Langdon also describes groupwork but within the context of complex trauma. Andrew Rosetti shares how he uses the Trauma, Resilience, Safety model in radiation oncology settings. Jenny Fu discusses how vocal psychotherapy can help individuals work through developmental trauma. Joanne Loewy explores the unique traumatic events experienced by musicians and examines trauma-informed music psychotherapeutic approaches. From an analytical music therapy perspective, Brian Harris shares his work regarding trauma experienced by the LGBTQAI+ community. Finally, Moshe Bensimon concludes this part by presenting five mechanisms of change in trauma-informed music therapy: relaxation, playfulness, super-expressive emotions, agency, and interpersonal synchronization. This part weaves together myriad theoretical frameworks with wonderful case examples that make the theory accessible and applicable. Personally, I found Loewy's chapter to be a gentle reminder for me to engage in "play" to maintain my own musical health and creativity.

Overall, I believe that Beer and Birnbaum met their objective of combining theoretical perspectives on TIP with real-life applications in music therapy practice. The diverse theoretical frameworks coupled with the wide range of topics make this book extremely valuable to experienced and early-career music therapists alike. As Julie Sutton writes, "we are all susceptible to trauma" (p. xviii), and this book serves as an excellent resource to anyone interested in applying TIP principles in their clinical practice. However, one limitation is that most of its content is situated within the U.S. context, which can exclude international readers. The book is available in paperback, hardback, and e-book formats. Despite having

a penchant for reading physical books, I found the e-book format surprisingly pleasant. The e-book is highly accessible: one can read the e-book via the VitalSource Bookshelf application on any device; highlight, annotate, bookmark, and make flashcards; and customize reading preferences through functions such as text size, font, and “read aloud.” The e-book format may be suitable for individuals with sensory, visual, and/or other needs. I look forward to an updated edition that explores intersectionality and more nuanced approaches to trauma-informed music therapy work to meet the challenges of the increasingly complex world that we live in.

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