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Extreme Music for Extreme States: How Heavy Metal Music Can Help with Experiences Conceptualised as 'Psychosis'

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Learning Goal:

To provide information about ways of working clinically on a number of levels using heavy metal music with people experiencing what might be described as 'psychosis'; community psychology via the internet and social media, integrating ideas into individual work, and during more acutely distressing states in inpatient settings

Abstract Text:

Listening to, dancing to or performing music can all be useful therapeutic strategies for people who experience extreme states of mind such as hearing voices or having unusual/unshared ideas. This poster describes the possible role of engagement with extreme or heavy metal music as helpful for people who have such experiences. There is discussion of our role as clinicians working with people directly, and the wider social media and web-based community psychology project Heavy Metal Therapy, which is informed by the empowerment and peer support movements. We will reflect on inpatient work in dance movement psychotherapy where people have selected heavy metal music as the genre that they would like to engage with in dance when experiencing more acutely distressing extreme states. In addition, we will discuss how the use of extreme music can be integrated into one to one clinical work as part of adapted idiosyncratic approaches to supporting people who have distressing experiences that may be conceptualised as psychosis, such as the use of playlists, lyrics or listening together to describe feelings or past experiences. Finally, we will describe the peer support project Heavy Metal Therapy which is an online community resource comprised of recovery stories, playlists and research, supported by a psychologically informed social media presence. We will reflect on what individuals and the metal community say about what is helpful to them about extreme music when it comes to enhancing wellbeing such as aspects of community, catharsis and emotional regulation. While this is principally a description of the work we are involved in, where possible we will show links to relevant research in the area. We hope to encourage discussions about adapted and creative practices for supporting both people in distress, and those who seek to maintain general wellbeing.

**ON THE HEALING POWER
OF HUMAN RECONNECTION**