

The Rhythm2Recovery Model

Rhythm & Reflection in Support of Social & Emotional Health

The Rhythm2Recovery model was first developed in 2003 as the Holyoake DRUMBEAT program to examine relationship issues in a fun and engaging way with young people. Over recent years it has been extended by the author, Simon Faulkner, to address a broader range of issues and enable its use with people of all ages facing challenges to their social and emotional health.

The Rhythm2Recovery format is an integrative model of practice combining experiential therapy techniques with cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) influenced by the third wave approaches of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) and Positive Psychology (PP). These newer cognitive approaches are strength based, and focus less on exploring problems and more on finding solutions.

In particular the Rhythm2Recovery model recognizes the uplifting power of music and the challenges of talk-based approaches in engaging and supporting many people facing social and emotional challenges, who are often socially isolated and cognitively confused. Developmental & neuro-imaging studies show that for many people who enter therapy, highly active primal brain areas (limbic system, brain stem) are driving behaviour while the thinking, rational part of our brains (frontal lobes) are less active. (Van Der Kolk, 2014).

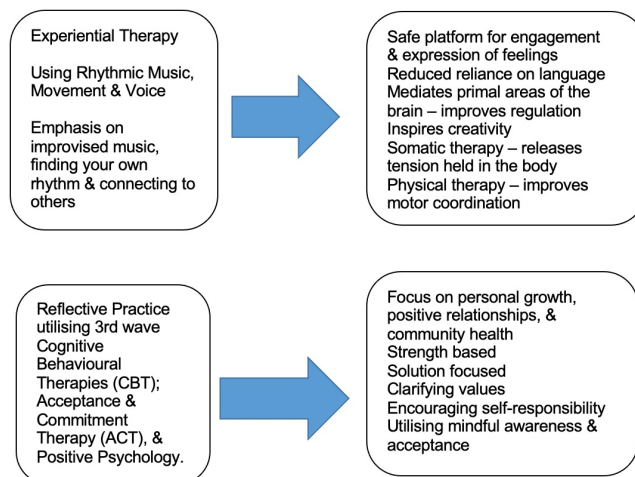


Figure 1 - THE RHYTHM2RECOVERY MODEL

The use of rhythmic music, drums and percussion, rhythmic movement and song, make up the experiential elements of a Rhythm2Recovery program, with exercises designed to deliver physical and psycho-social benefits whilst concurrently exploring universal life-skill themes. These experiential exercises are then combined with reflective discussions utilising a cognitive framework. This combination increases awareness and focus; expanding

perspective and understanding, and empowering personal growth. The program materials offer a wide degree of flexibility for the practitioner to adapt the content of any specific session to the needs of an individual or group of individuals.

The Rhythm2 Recovery approach is predominantly Psycho-Social, exploring the interaction of individual psychology with the social environment. It incorporates a strength based, solution orientated, focus that avoids the powerlessness often associated with diagnosis, and the defensiveness triggered by examining too closely the personal challenges faced by a individual. A strength based approach also reduces the likelihood of re-traumatisation that may occur when the focus turns to an individual's problems or pathology. The focus on strengths and solutions also allows the program to be utilised in both clinical and educational contexts. Psycho-Social education, often termed social and emotional learning (SEL) is now a key element of school based education and a mandatory curriculum unit in many school districts - it is closely associated with improved school climate, reduced levels of anti-social behaviour, and increased academic performance (Durlack et al, 2011).

Key elements of Act and Commitment Therapy are incorporated into the R2R model, including the practice of mindfulness, utilised by R2R practitioners with an accompanying drumming pulse. Mindfulness serves as an ongoing practice for greater awareness and a way to create a separation between the individual and the burden of their unhelpful thoughts. The focus on working with, accepting, and detaching from some of the more challenging parts of ourselves (emotional pain) rather than trying to banish them is a clear principal of ACT that is developed through mindfulness. The other strong influence from ACT in the R2R model is the focus on Values; that through identifying what is important and meaningful for individuals we uncover a template for action and behaviour.

Positive Psychology focuses on well being and life satisfaction, avoiding negative emotions and symptom relief, and instead focusing on developing and applying individual strengths to every day issues. Positive Psychology looks for the positive elements in life to build self-esteem, optimism, resilience, vitality and positive relationships. Each of these different elements impacts how we live and how satisfied we are with our lives. In the R2R model we incorporate this framework via a strong focus on the influence of healthy, supportive relationships. And by combining engagement with rhythmic music to the use of analogies, drawn from the rhythm exercises, to explore the benefits of a positive, optimistic, strength-based approach to managing our lives.

Within the Rhythm2Recovery model the term 'Recovery' refers to supporting people to improve the quality of their daily lives. In keeping with the principles of ACT we are not looking to remove symptoms but rather to reduce their influence, so that life can be lived fully and meaningfully. More specifically this model focuses on positive relationships as central to recovery, health and happiness. The exercises contained in the R2R syllabus address a wide range of different themes that impact our connection to each other. They encourage the development of social and emotional competencies and understanding as a way to nurture trusting, equitable and supportive relationships, and as a pathway to sustainable recovery.

Core elements of the Rhythm2Recovery model include a focus on:

SAFETY - Exercises promote a safe therapeutic environment and examine the importance of safety in everyday life & healthy relationships.

VALUES - Helping people identify what really matters to them in order to find direction and provide a compass for behaviour.

BELONGING - Music serves as a pathway to connection; exercises explore avenues to social acceptance and community engagement.

SELF-AWARENESS - Mindful awareness allows us to reflect on our thoughts, feelings and behaviours without being beholden to them.

SELF-RESPONSIBILITY & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY - Responsibility allows us to take control of our own lives, and work well with others.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS - Exercises foster the relational skills necessary to develop supportive, healthy and respectful relationships with others.

EMOTIONAL REGULATION - Musical exercises focusing on tempo & volume, impact regulatory parts of the brain to assist in the development of improved regulatory skills

ALTRUISM - Exercises and activities promote the rewards of giving to, and supporting others

The amalgam of this approach stems predominantly from my own experiences in working as a counsellor across different settings, and the published research drawn from many of those sessions that examined levels of engagement and therapeutic outcomes. My experience in the drug & alcohol, mental health and justice sectors gave me an appreciation of the 'risk factors' and 'protective factors' that influence an individual's trajectory in avoiding or not, problems of addiction, anxiety, depression, or criminal offending; many of the focus areas of the R2R program are aligned to this research literature.

Key to the successful implementation of any model are the skills and reflective practice of the practitioner; their ability to create a safe therapeutic environment, connect genuinely with the individuals they work with, help them find their own truth, and motivate them to act in their own interests. In terms of effective practice, a model is at best a template. Practice by its own definition alludes to ongoing learning and adaption. In my mind effective practice is always individual centered and overrides the demands of any theory.

For more information on the Rhythm2Recovery model visit www.rhythm2recovery.com

Simon Faulkner
Director,
Rhythm2Recovery
simon@rhythm2recovery.com

