

Techniques for Leading Therapeutic Drumming Circles

Setting the Tone

Smile, introduce yourself. Get everybody feeling comfortable and relaxed but on the edge. Assure the group “You don’t have to ever have played drums before to participate in a drum circle.”

Techniques

- Thunder Rolls Rolling from middle to the edge of the drum, getting acquainted with it.
- The 1-2-3 Beat AKA the “we will rock you” beat (you don’t have to sing the song.) Get everybody playing in time. Follow low tones.
- Visual Cues Offer visual cues; the more animated the better. Move while you play so people have something to follow..
- Split Up Parts One half of the group gets beats 1-2 the other half gets 3. Then switch it around.
- The James Brown “Hit Me” Everybody plays however many hits the Leader calls out. (“Hit me twice,” “Hit me 3 times,” etc.)
- Call and Response The leader plays a phrase and the group repeats the same phrase, or the leader plays a phrase and the group finishes it.
- Melody Fill-in The leader sings a melody, and the group finishes the phrase.
- Solos The leader calls out the name of a person to take a solo. The soloist then passes it on to another group member. The leader provides lots of positive reinforcement and encourages group members to take advantage of the moment where they can 'shine' individually."
- Group Follows Beat of Soloist The soloist starts soloing and then begins a beat, then the group follows. If the beat is strong, go with it. If the beat is not strong, fade it out to the next soloist.
- Sing Song with a Beat The leader sings a simple song, something everybody can relate to, easy to sing along with, inspiring, with a universal message. Chants are always successful—melodies without lyrics or melodies with repetitive lyrics. Chants can be created using simple phrases relevant to group members, for example, 'I am strong' or 'I will beat my pain away.'

Closing the Session

Close Session Always remember to thank the group for creating this experience together and allowing the leader to be a part of it. Leave the group feeling empowered and interdependent. NOT independent or dependent, but interdependent.