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The use of original song-writing to help families cope with hospice care

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The Use of Original Song-Writing to Help Families Cope with Hospice Care

Kelsey McQuillan



How does the use of original song-writing help the family members through the grieving process during and after a death?



“I needed to get that emotion out and they wanted something they could remember me by.”

~Zach Sobiech, Writer/Performer of “Clouds”



“For me it’s Zach’s way of saying ‘I’m ok’. Saying ‘goodbye’. And I’m just so grateful that it’s there because I’m going to need it later.”

~Laura Sobiech, Zach’s mother on “Clouds”

Original Song Writing

Definition: “The process of creating, notating and/or recording lyrics and music by the client(s) and therapist within a therapeutic relationship to address psychosocial, emotional, cognitive, and communication needs of the client” (Wigram and Baker, 2005)

How it impacts the family:

- Creates a message from their loved-one that they can keep forever
- Opens up communication between families and patients
- Promotes emotional expression from both the patient and family

Recommendations

There are few studies with family members after the patient passes away. I would recommend that more follow up research be completed to see how the family copes with their loss. I would suggest following up with families after a month, six months, and a year about how often they listen to the original songs, and how the songs have impacted them now that their loved one has passed.

References

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Physiological Impact of Music

- **Research :**
 - shows that music, especially slower paced, softer music, decreases the physiologic signs of stress including:
 - Reduced blood pressure
 - Slower heart rate
 - Diminished ACTH levels
 - ACTH leads to a release of cortisol which is commonly associated with heightened stress

This is how music therapy affects people in general, which means it can be applied to both the patient and the family members who are involved.