***Will be published spring 2016 – Expressive Arts Interventions for Career Counselors, Edited by Suzanne Deggis – White, Springer Publishing***

**Developing a Playlist for Empowerment: Songs in the Key of Your Life**

**Cynthia B. Greer**

**Description and Overall Goal:**

This two session workshop integrates the concepts and understanding that as human beings we are always in “transition”. According to William Bridges (2009) a transition can be defined as the psychological implication of change that causes people to reevaluate their identity. People experience transition in three major phases: (1) the ending, the letting go; (2) the confusion phase, and (3) the new beginning phase. Also, career development theory informs us that career development is a life-long process that involves the integration of all aspects of a person’s life in terms of the psychological/emotional/social, the spiritual and the physical. In the 21st century people must be able to cope with change and transition in order to lead a life with purpose. Therefore, this workshop will use music therapy as a modality to provide a sense of empowerment for people who are primarily in the second phase of Transition. The “songs in the key of your life” is based on the acclaimed Stevie Wonder album (1976) Songs in the Key of Life. In this album the singer/songwriter examines his: relationships, values, and social and spiritual connections, and through this analysis gains insight and reclaims and shares his purpose.

This workshop is for men and women who are 50 and over, and specifically those people who are considered the “Baby Boomer” generation. This workshop would benefit people who are in “transition” because of: losing a job/career, choosing to leave an unfulfilling job/career, and/or considering retirement; entering the paid workforce for the first time or reentering the job market after an extended period of time. Also, this workshop caters to people who may be discouraged or anxious about their future and who are seeking an opportunity for reflection, inspiration and motivation to deal with change and the unknown in their lives. Questions that perspective participants might have asked as they encountered change are: What am I going to do with the rest of my life? What is my purpose? And, what is my legacy?

The goal of the workshop is for participants to understand the phases of transition and to explore their past identity through music, and develop a new playlist that will be the beginning of a sense of empowerment for the future. In getting to phase 3 participants will be ready to formulate their own personal mission statement.

**Materials:** Counselor/facilitator should have a copy of the book by William Bridges (2009), *Transitions: Making Sense of Life’s Changes;* a CD of Stevie Wonder’s *Songs in the Key of Life;* a sound system*;* copier and copies of the lyrics of some of selected songs on the CD; computer/laptop with access to the internet; notebook paper, pen/pencils; and large writing pad and markers. Participants should be encouraged to bring/or have access to their own: laptop, MP3 player, and Smart Phone. It would be helpful if participants had their own copy of the Bridges book but it is not required.

**Preparation:** The counselor will need to:

* Read the Bridges (2009) book or at least read the online summaries of the book, and prepare a one page handout defining transitions giving a brief description of the 3 phases. The facilitator might prepare a brief PowerPoint instead of a handout or in addition to the handout.
* Review the theoretical constructs of career and lifestyle development as a lifelong process. Revisit the theories of Donald Super and Sunny Hansen and her Integrative Life Planning (ILP) construct.
* Listen to the Stevie Wonder CD, and pay specific attention to the following songs: *As; I Wish; Have a Talk with God; and Past-time Paradise.* Also, access the YouTube video of Chuck Brown and listen to Chuck Brown’s song *Beautiful Life.* Review the technical aspects of developing a playlists if participants need help in this area. And, have written copies of the playlist assignment.
* Review the ethical guidelines for confidentiality in a group situation and the guidelines for discussion.
* Review, online, Steven Covey’s information about writing a personal mission/purpose statement.

**Instructions: Session 1**

* Counselor/facilitator introduces him/herself and has the participants introduce themselves. The facilitator explains the purpose and goals of the workshop, confidentiality guidelines and the discussion guidelines are reviewed. The facilitator explains the need for the group to be a safe place for discussion because people will be sharing personal information. It should be stressed that no one should dominate a discussion and that there is a need for brevity.
* The Facilitator will introduce the concept of Transition by defining the term and explaining the phases of transition. The Facilitator can use the PowerPoint and/or handout as a resource.
* The counselor will ask participants to share what stage of Transition that they believe they are in and to briefly explain why they believe that they are in this phase.
* The Facilitator should paraphrase each participant’s perspective, and give a summary of the perspectives with the purpose of transitioning to the introduction of Stevie Wonder’s CD *Songs in the Key of Life*. Ask participants if they know who Stevie Wonder is, what do they know about him and whether thy have listened to his music.
* Play select songs from the CD, such as: *Pastime Paradise* – about people who live in the past and have little hope for the future; or the songs *I Wish* or *Have a Talk with God*. A hard copy of the lyrics can be made available to the participants.
* Encourage participants to give their perspective of the songs in terms of Wonder’s values, beliefs, possible challenges and beliefs.
* For the homework/assignment request that participants develop their own playlist. Each participant should have at least one song in the following four categories that: (1) describe the major challenges in their life; (2) describe their current phase in their transition; (3) provide motivation, inspiration and strength; and (4) describe their future and/or purpose. Participants should come to Session 2 prepared to share their Playlist with the group. The written instructions should explain how the playlists can be downloaded/ recorded on their electronic devices. Participants without access to the technology should be able to use the facilitator’s computer or their playlist can be written.
* End the first session with Chuck Brown’s You Tube video – Beautiful Day, as an example of a song that describes choice, attitude, purpose and possibly a new beginning.

**Session 2:**

* The facilitator reminds everyone about confidentiality and the guidelines for discussion.
* The Facilitator gives a brief overview of Session 1, and restates the homework assignment and the purpose.
* The participants are requested to discuss the process and success of putting their playlist together. The facilitator also asks about the challenges they encountered, and requests participants to reflect about what they learned from the process. The facilitator summarizes the reflections.
* The Facilitator asks the participants the names of the songs that they chose under the 4 categories. A request is made for a volunteer to record the songs on the writing pad while the participants call out the names of the songs. The lists of songs are posted on the wall.
* Based on the available time and number of participants, the Facilitator asks for at least 2 or 3 volunteers to share their playlists with the group and give a brief explanation of their song choices. The facilitator encourages group members to ask questions of participant/ presenters about their past successes, their core values, their contributions and their future goals. The playlist should not only serve as inspiration but the process of putting the play list together should have provided a sense of empowerment to move forward from phase 2 and move toward phase 3, a new beginning, by reflecting about their successes based on their challenges, their contribution, their values and their goals. These are the components to developing a personal mission or purpose statement.
* As the workshop concludes, the Facilitator uses the playlist as a metaphor to replace the old tape of confusion that has resided in their brain to the new playlists that allows them develop a new purpose and mission for a new beginning.
* The workshop concludes with the Facilitator congratulating the participants on their new playlists, and giving the participants a one page handout on writing a personal/mission statement that they take with them.