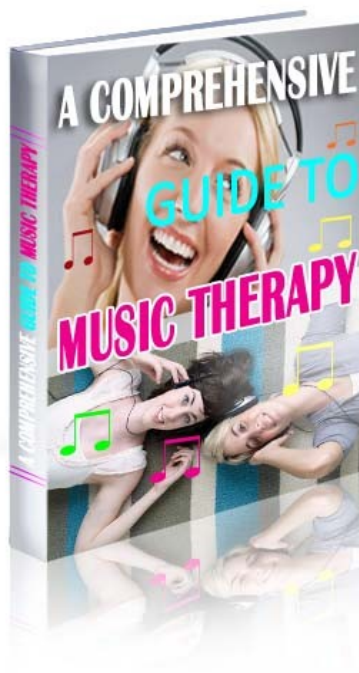


A Comprehensive Guide to Music Therapy



By

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The Specialized Use of Music

Music is a universal language. It influences all levels of human existence. It is a medium for communication, which can be both a pleasant and healing experience. Modern science and medicine are now rediscovering the healing powers of music. And music therapy - the specialized use of music in treating persons with special needs in mental and physical health, rehabilitation and special education - is gaining ground. In the West it is now an accepted form of treatment even within orthodox medical practice.

It is believed that music stimulates the pituitary gland, whose secretions affect the nervous system and the flow of blood. To be healed by music, it is necessary to vibrate the cells of the body, for it is through these vibrations that the diseased person's consciousness can be changed effectively to promote health. The right kind of music helps one relax and refresh. Even during the course of working, light music improves efficiency.

Listening to music helps control negative aspects of our personality like worry, bias and anger. In addition, it can help cure headache, abdominal pain and tension. Music therapy is one of the most effective ways of controlling emotions, blood pressure and restoring the functioning of the liver.

Music therapy is an efficacious and valid treatment for persons who have psychosocial, affective, cognitive and communicative needs. Research results and clinical experiences attest to the viability of music therapy even in those who are resistive to

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other treatment approaches. Music is a form of sensory stimulation that provokes responses due to the familiarity, predictability and feelings of security associated with it.

Music therapists use music activities, both instrumental and vocal, which are designed to facilitate changes that are non-musical in nature. Music therapy programs are based on individual assessment, treatment planning, and ongoing programs evaluation. Frequently functioning as members of an interdisciplinary team, music therapists implement programs with groups or individuals that display a vast continuum of needs, from reduction of anxiety to deeper self-understanding.

Music therapists work with the interdisciplinary team to assess emotional well-being, physical health, social functioning, communication abilities, and cognitive skills through musical responses. When individualized music experiences are designed by the music therapist to fit functional abilities and needs, responses may be immediate and readily apparent. Clients need not have a music background to benefit from music therapy.

Music is capable of improving happiness, peace, health and concentration. It is, however, important to know the method and duration for which music therapy is to be administered. This knowledge can be obtained through regular experiments and experience. The first step towards this is the correct diagnosis of the disease and then the selection of the precise raga that will be helpful. Procedure, discipline and a systematic method will help achieve this goal.

Important Tips for Music Therapy

If you'd like to experiment with sound therapy on your own, Ortiz, Campbell and Goldman offer some suggestions.

Raise your sound awareness by noticing the sounds around you in everyday life. This grounds you in the here and now and enhances your communication skills by improving your listening skills.

Play your favorite music when you do housework or unpleasant chores. Not only will it distract you, but it will motivate you and create pleasant associations with that activity.

When you're angry, tense, or frustrated, play an energetic piece of music. Move your body for five to seven minutes, letting the music release your emotions. Then your mind can look at the situation with a more objective and compassionate attitude.

If you want the benefits of deep relaxation but have problems with formal meditation, sit somewhere quiet. Hum or chant different vowel sounds and "direct" them to various parts of your body. When we create and focus on sound, we begin to stop the constant chatter in our minds, which is the first step towards not only deep relaxation, but spiritual enlightenment too!

Benefits of Music Therapy

Music therapy is for anyone. Although it can be used therapeutically for people who have physical, emotional, social, or cognitive deficits, even those who are healthy can use music to relax, reduce stress, improve the mood, or to accompany exercise. There are no potentially harmful or toxic effects.

Music therapists help their patients achieve a number of goals through music, including improvement of communication, academic strengths, attention span, and motor skills. They may also assist with behavioral therapy and pain management.

Physical Effects of Music Therapy

The brain function physically changes in response to music. The rhythm can guide the body into breathing in slower, deeper patterns that have a calming effect. Heart rate and blood pressure are also responsive to the types of music that are listened to. The heartbeat tends to speed up or slow down depending on the volume and speed of the auditory stimulus. Louder and faster noises tend to raise both heart rate and blood pressure; slower, softer, and more regular tones produce the opposite result. Music can also relieve muscle tension and improve motor skills. It is often used to help rebuild physical patterning skills in rehabilitation clinics. Levels of endorphins, natural pain relievers, are increased while listening to music, and levels of stress hormones are decreased. This latter effect may partially explain the ability of music to improve immune function.

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A 1993 study at Michigan State University showed that even 15 minutes of exposure to music could increase interleukin-1 levels, which heightens immunity.

Mental and Emotional Effects of Music Therapy

Mental Effects

Depending on the type and style of sound, music can either sharpen mental acuity or assist in relaxation. Memory and learning can be enhanced. This has been used with good results in children who have learning disabilities. This effect may also be partially due to increased concentration that many people have while listening to music.

Better productivity is another outcome of an improved ability to concentrate. The term "Mozart effect" was coined after a study showed that college students performed better on maths problems when listening to classical music.

Emotional Effects

The ability of music to influence human emotion is well known and is used extensively by moviemakers. A variety of musical moods may be used to create feelings of calmness, tension, excitement, or romance. Lullabies have long been popular for soothing babies to sleep. Music can also be used to express emotion non-verbally - a very valuable therapeutic tool in some settings.

How Music Therapist Set Goals on Patient?

Music is used to form a relationship with the patient. The music therapist sets goals on an individual basis, depending on the reasons for treatment, and selects specific activities and exercises to help the patient progress. Objectives may include development of communication, cognitive, motor, emotional, and social skills. Some of the techniques used to achieve this are singing, listening, instrumental music, composition, creative movement, guided imagery, and other methods as appropriate.

Other disciplines may be integrated as well, such as dance, art and psychology. Patients may develop musical abilities as a result of therapy, but this is not a major concern. The primary aim is to improve the patient's ability to function.

Music Therapy Techniques

Learning to play an instrument is an excellent musical activity to develop motor skills in individuals with developmental delays, brain injuries, or other motor impairment. It is also an exercise in impulse control and group cooperation. Creative movement is another activity that can help to improve coordination, as well as strength, balance, and gait. Improvisation facilitates the non-verbal expression of emotion. It encourages socialization and communication about feelings as well.

Singing develops articulation, rhythm, and breath control. Remembering lyrics and melody is an exercise in sequencing for stroke victims and others who may be intellectually impaired.

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Composition of words and music is one avenue available to assist the patient in working through fears and negative feelings. Listening is an excellent way to practice attending and remembering. It may also make the patient aware of memories and emotions that need to be acknowledged and perhaps talked about. Singing and discussion is a similar method, which is used with some patient populations to encourage dialogue.

Guided Imagery and Music is a very popular technique developed by music therapist Helen Bonny. Listening to music is used as a path to invoke emotions, picture, and symbols from the patient. This is a bridge to the exploration and expression of feelings.

Music Therapy Benefits for Children

Music therapy enhances the quality of life. It involves relationships between a qualified therapist and child between one child and another; between child and family; and between the music and the participants. These relationships are structured and adapted through the elements of music to create a positive environment and set the occasion for successful growth.

Music stimulates all the senses and involves the child at many levels. This "multi-nodal approach" facilitates many developmental skills.

Quality learning and maximum participation occur when children are permitted to experience the joy of play. The

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medium of music therapy allows this play to occur naturally and frequently.

Music is highly motivating, yet it can also have a calming and relaxing effect. Enjoyable music activities are designed to be success-oriented and make children feel better about themselves.

Music therapy can help a child manage pain and stressful situations.

Music can encourage socialization, self-expression, communication, and motor development.

Because the brain processes music in both hemispheres, music can stimulate cognitive functioning and may be used for remediation of some speech/language skills.

Music Therapy Benefits for Adult

The geriatric population can be especially prone to anxiety and depression, particularly in old home residents. Chronic diseases causing pain are also not uncommon in this setting. Music is an excellent outlet to provide enjoyment, relaxation, relief from pain, and an opportunity to socialize and reminisce about music that has had special importance to the individual.

It can have a striking effect on patients with Alzheimer's disease, even sometimes allowing them to focus and become responsive

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for a time. Music has also been observed to decrease the agitation that is so common with this disease.

One study shows that elderly people who play a musical instrument are more physically and emotionally fit as they age than their non-musical peers.

Music therapy is efficacious and valid with older persons who have functional deficits in physical, psychological, cognitive or social functioning. Research results and clinical experiences attest to the viability of music therapy even in those who are resistive to other treatment approaches. Music is a form of sensory stimulation, which provokes responses due to the familiarity, predictability, and feelings of security.

Music and Child Birth

Research has proven that mothers require less pharmaceutical pain relief during labour if they make use of music. Using music that is familiar and associated with positive imagery is the most helpful. During early labour, this will promote relaxation. Maternal movement is helpful to get the baby into a proper birthing position and dilate the cervix.

Enjoying some "music to move by" can encourage the mother to stay active for as long as possible during labour. The rhythmic auditory stimulation may also prompt the body to release endorphins, which are a natural form of pain relief. Many women select different styles of music for each stage of labour, with a more intense, or faster piece feeling like a natural

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accompaniment to the more difficult parts of labour.
Instrumental music is often preferred.

Music Therapy for Alzheimer's Disease

A music therapy program raised melatonin levels and improved behavior and sleeping problems in 20 male Alzheimer's patients. Jule Klotter, writing about this path breaking experiment, says that the Alzheimer's patients underwent music therapy for 30-40 minutes, five days a week for one month. Blood samples were taken before the first session, at the end of the four weeks of therapy, and six weeks after the study's conclusion.

Dr Ardash Kumar and colleagues at the University of Miami School of Medicine (Florida), who reported the study in *Alternative Therapies* (1999), checked the levels of melatonin, norepinephrine, epinephrine, serotonin, and prolactin. These brain chemicals are known to affect the mental state of human beings. They found that melatonin, epinephrine and norepinephrine blood levels had risen significantly by the end of the four-week therapy program. Moreover, melatonin levels remained high six weeks after the program had stopped. Epinephrine and norepinephrine levels, by that time, had returned to their original readings. Serotonin and prolactin were not affected by music therapy.

In addition to the hormonal changes, the participants in the study also became more active and cooperative, and slept better. "Relaxation with the type of music that calms you down is very

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beneficial," said Kumar. "To promote a sense of calm and well-being, you can listen to your favorite soothing music when you eat, before you sleep, and when you want to relax. Music therapy might be a safer and more effective alternative to many psychotropic medications. Like meditation and yoga, it can help us maintain our hormonal and emotional balance, even during periods of stress or disease."

Music, Emotions and the Brain

It is difficult to guess when Homo sapiens first started to use, understand and enjoy music. Many who research the subject believe that music, song and dance preceded language as a means of communication. The unborn child provides some evidence of the capacity of all human beings to react to music when motor responses to rhythmical stimuli, or even specific pieces of music, are commonly reported by the mother.

In the neonatal period, the vocalizations of the young child are musical responses. The rise and fall of the mother's cooing patterns are also very similar in all societies and cultures. As time passed, the musical qualities of rhythm and pitch gradually subsumed into the development of speech.

These qualities are subsequently localized mainly in the left side of the brain, which is subject to significant growth between the ages of two and four. This innate capacity of the brain to interpret musical information suggests that the process has some biological survival value too.

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Considerable research has proved that there are neurophysical mechanisms, which appear to have an inherent capacity to analyze musical patterns. The rhythms of the body and those of music have also been studied. Changes in pulse rate, respiration, galvanic skin responses and muscle activity have been noted. It has also been proved that the heartbeat could be slowed if the speed of the music was one beat per minute slower than the pulse rate suggesting an entrainment effect between the speed of the music and the pulse.

Music and movement is another area of research. There was a striking increase in muscular activity in the legs in response to dance music, in the forehead in response to an arithmetical task, and in both when loud music was played.

Music is related to certain basic physiological processes. This has been proved scientifically. Music speaks to us. There are ways in which the structure of music can be compared to that of spoken and written language. The study of disturbances of musical function in relation to focal brain damage from strokes and injury has led to the use of the term amusia which denotes the impairment of musical skills and understanding associated with a lesion of the cerebral hemisphere. Like aphasia, amusia can be divided into expressive and receptive types. Musical dyslexia and dysgraphia have been used to describe the inability to read or write musical notation respectively.

However, not much is known about how the central nervous system registers and reacts to vibrations and particularly those above and below the range of human hearing. The considerable interest and increasing amount of literature on vibro-acoustic therapy, which uses pulsed frequencies of a very low order as

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well as musical vibrations, suggests that the physical effect of vibration on the nervous system may contribute to the therapeutic potential of music.

Certain musical frequencies vibrate the brain cells and this process might 'wash' the cells so that the cerebrospinal, fluid may more effectively carry away the metabolites and waste products of neuronal activity. Maybe, this is the modern equivalent to the ancient belief that the human body and the brain 'resonate' with music.

Music as Medicine

Music enters the body through the ear, and the bones of the body act like a tuning fork. The neurological fields of the body are then stimulated by music. Music is a means by which all people can feel these healing vibrations. Even people with profound handicaps can benefit from music healing effects. Research in physiological responses to music supports the hypothesis that listening to music influences a person's autonomic responses.

Science has proven that music focused in the higher register increases tension. Conversely, music played in the lower register reduces tension. Music that is played at a tempo of 80-90 beats per minute increases tension, while music played at 40-60 beats per minute decreases tension.

Vibrational therapy sessions can be used to affect physiological changes such as lowering of blood pressure, heart rate, and muscle tension. Studies have shown that music used as medicine can increase the immune function and decrease ACTH

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(stress) hormones. Music and sound has also been shown to kill cancer cells.

Another benefit of "healing" music is to stir our emotions and feelings, to help us deal with grief, sadness, anger or other feelings. By allowing ourselves to really experience the feelings, the intensity will eventually lessen and even dissipate, resulting in healing. When we avoid our feelings (consciously or subconsciously) they nonetheless tend to build up inside. They don't just go away.' Music and sound are wonderful tools for helping us deal with feelings within us, whether we're aware of them or not.

Types of Healing Music

Music that energizes our body, stimulates our brain, awakens our feelings, ignites our soul, relaxes our body, calms our mind, unwinds our emotions, motivates our actions, helps us unwind, helps us sleep, wakes us up, expands our thinking, and helps us not to think, all of these can be healing.

Music used in the appropriate way can be healing. The key is to use wisdom and listen to what our inner healer tells us about how music makes us feel. There is no one type of music that is healing music. Listen to a wide variety of music and pay attention to how you respond with your whole being (mind, body, and spirit). Large listings of music are available all over the world for various illnesses, situations of the mind and other purposes.

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By no means are these the only pieces of music that are healing, and the lists may change dramatically over time as more and more people become involved in this exciting field of health and healing. Music, of course, cannot replace sound medical advice. Music can uphold the emotion, the spirit and the soul and can benefit anybody, whatever the situation. But it is erroneous to believe that it is a panacea.

How Music Affects Us?

Wow does music affect our well-being? It seems there is no definitive answer to this question. However, experts in the field of music and sound therapy feel there are two major ways in which music and sound can affect our lives.

The first is the principle of entrainment. This refers to the phenomena of being in sync. In other words, our bodies automatically adjust to the pace, rhythm, or pulse of the music. How many times have you walked into a room with other things on your mind and heard music playing? You stop to listen for a few minutes and all of a sudden, your foot is tapping to the music or you are swaying your head or body with the beat. Or, a certain piece of music evokes memories of a time when you heard the music before, and the feelings of that time come immediately back into your awareness. In scientific terms, our psyches and bodies become entrained to the sonic environment created by the music.

Music in this sense can be a powerful tool in both positive and negative ways to the listener. Music entrainment is more than just a tool to be used for behavior modification, however. Music

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has the power to integrate the whole person allowing profound healing on many levels.

Music is one of the few experiences that can touch a person on all levels of consciousness. It is a powerful sensory stimulus that can work simultaneously on the body, mind, and spirit.

Vibrational entrainment, as a result of listening to music, can bring harmony to the body by actually entraining the body with the music. It can have a transformative effect on an individual by moving through the body systems and bringing about harmony. Through the use of music, positive effects have been seen in the nervous system, affecting the endocrine system, which in turn enhances the immune system.

A second principle that music utilizes in affecting patients is the principle of diversion. This method of utilizing music and sound is helpful in taking the attention away from an unpleasant or unwanted situation. An example of diversionary music is the playing of bright, happy, energizing music when the listener feels down in the dumps. Music, in this sense, can be used in a therapeutic situation to reduce anxiety and pain, temporarily transporting the listener to another reality during the healing process.

How Does Sound Work?

A sound wave basically causes changes in air pressure as it moves through the air. Our ears respond to this information and our brain processes it into sound information. Stand in front of a good speaker playing low bass or hold your hand under a large

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drum being played and you'll feel the air currents moving. We also receive sound information from our whole bodies. Our skin is very tactile and responds to sound waves quite readily.

Sound and music are separate. Sound is just that - a sound. It may or may not have a pitch (specific frequency) or a pure waveform or a temporal (rhythmic) pattern but if it's audible or perceptible, we call it a sound. Music is a combining of elements that typically incorporates these sounds into a lyrical blend of pitch, melody and rhythm and progresses/modulates from one chord to another in an emotional fashion. Combinations of pitches/ chords/ intervals that are perceived as being harmonious and pleasant are described as being consonant. Harsh combinations are called dissonant.

It is often very important and appropriate to use dissonance of varying degrees in healing music. If you are stuck, sometimes you need a bit of a push to move on, and if the musical environment is kept too sweet and cheery then you don't have much incentive to journey forward.

Generally, major keys are perceived as being light and uplifting. Minor keys are felt as being more serious, reverent, and mysterious.

Different Music Therapy Methods

1. Improvisational Music Therapy Method

The improvisational model often includes Nordoff-Robbins, Clinical Orff Schulwerk, or other types of

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improvisational styles. The basic philosophy of improvisational music therapy is that these techniques elicit a client's response from every level. It develops contact with the client within the context of the musical experience. The role of a music therapist in this model often works supportively, creating a musical emotional environment that accepts and enhances the client's responses. This method provides experiences for socialization, communication, and expression of feelings and emotions among group participants.

The most common instruments used for this method are rhythm instruments and Orff instruments. The music therapist can also integrate movement, speech, and drama in this model.

2 Singing and Discussion Method

Singing and discussion is a typical music therapy method that can be used for adolescent populations as well as for the elderly. The music stimulates clients' responses to the lyric parts. Sometimes the music itself encourages the expression of thoughts and feelings associated with the songs.

Typical procedures of this method are as follows: The therapist usually opens the session by singing songs familiar to the clients. After singing several songs, the therapist leads a discussion related to the themes of the songs. Once each client has expressed and discussed his or her own thoughts, feelings, and ideas, the therapist improvises a song with the words from the clients.

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This can be a very positive conclusion to the session (in fact, the therapist makes a song to be positive) so that each client might carryover his or her feelings and emotions in productive ways.

3 Guided Imagery and Music Method

GIM or Guided Imagery and Music is a technique in which the act of listening to classical music is combined with a relaxed state of mind and body in order to evoke imagery for the purpose of self-actualization. The imagery evoked reflects aspects of the self and is used by the client, with the aid of the therapist.

GIM does not intend to cure or treat symptoms; rather, it is in search of the client's inner awareness. There is a belief that everyone can understand his or her problems and has the ability to overcome the problem within the self. Thus, GIM is based on humanistic therapy, influenced by Abraham Maslow and Jung.

4 Clinical Orff Schulwerk Method

This approach, utilizing the method of music education developed by Carl Orff for German school children, has been specially adapted for mentally retarded and autistic children in the United States. COS or Clinical Orff Schulwerk offers an effective groundwork for these children because of their pre-disposition toward rhythm, order and repetition.

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The overall process involves the use of movement, rhythm, sounds, language and musical expression in a group experience. Structure is provided by simple chants, rondos, poems, nonsense words and ostinati employed, all sung within the pentatonic scale. The rondo form is used extensively, as it allows for repetition as well as for individual creative response.

Specially-designed percussion instruments permit the participation of even the most severely disturbed or handicapped child. Through "successive approximation", specific tasks are taught in a concrete step-by-step approach. Learning is effected through modeling (imitation) and behavior shaping, reinforced by behavioral techniques.

With groups of autistic children, considerable attention is given to language development through the use of sign language, which is seen as enhancing speech.

Among other areas dealt with in the Orff context are body image and awareness, laterality, gross motor expression, fine motor coordination, receptive language, spatial relationships, simple categorizing and simple association. The significant value of COS is that it helps the child become invested in a meaningful group experience.

FAQ

What Really is Music Therapy?

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Music therapy is an allied health profession in which music is used within a therapeutic relationship to address physical, psychological, cognitive, and social needs of individuals. After assessing the strengths and needs of each client, the qualified music therapist provides the indicated treatment including creating, singing, moving to, and/or listening to music. Through musical involvement in the therapeutic context, the client's abilities are strengthened and transferred to other areas of his or her life.

Music therapy also provides avenues for communication that can be helpful to those who find it difficult to express themselves in words. Research in the music therapy profession supports the effectiveness of music therapy in many areas such as facilitating movement and overall physical rehabilitation, motivating people to cope with treatment, providing emotional support for clients and their families, and providing an outlet for the expression of feelings.

When is Music Therapy prescribed?

Music therapy is the prescribed use of music and musical interventions in order to restore, maintain, and improve emotional, physical, physiological, and spiritual health and well-being. Within this definition are the key elements that define interventions as music therapy.

Abroad, music therapy is essentially prescribed by members of the client's treatment team, which can

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include doctors, social workers, psychologists, teachers, case workers or parents.

Music is the primary therapeutic tool. Using music to establish a trusting relationship, the music therapist then works to improve the client's physical and mental functioning through carefully structured activities.

Examples can include singing, listening, playing instruments, composition, moving to music, and music and imagery exercises.

Music is administered by a trained music therapist. A music therapist's education and training is extensive. Musical interventions are developed and used by the therapist based on his/her knowledge of the music's effect on behavior, the client's strengths and weaknesses, and the therapeutic goals.

Music therapy works towards specific therapeutic goals and objectives. Goal areas include communicative, academic, motor, emotional, and social skills. It is important to be aware that while clients may develop their musical skills during treatment, these skills are not the primary concern of the therapist. Rather it is the effect such musical development might have on the client's physical, psychological and socio economical functioning.

What are the kinds of goals a Music Therapist might address?

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Music therapists address a number of non-musical goals including improving communication skills, decreasing inappropriate behavior, improving academic and motor skills, increasing attention span, strengthening social and leisure skills, pain management and stress reduction.

Music therapy can also help individuals on their journey of self-growth and understanding.

What are the typical Music Therapy interventions that might be used in a session?

There is an extensive array of music activities and interventions. For example, the therapist and client might compose songs to express feelings; one client might learn to play the piano to improve fine motor skills, while another client might 'Use instruments to improvise unspoken emotions. Music therapists may also use music and movement activities, singing, lyric discussion or music and imagery to help the client reach their goals.

What are the main therapeutic characteristics of music?

The important therapeutic characteristics are:

Music captivates and maintains attention - it stimulates and utilizes many parts of the brain;

Music is easily adapted to, and can be reflective of, a person's abilities;

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Music structures time in a way that even the mentally challenged can understand ("that's the last verse – my exercise session is almost over!");

Music provides a meaningful, enjoyable context for repetition;

Music provides a social context - it sets up a safe, structured setting for verbal and non-verbal communication;

Music is an effective memory aid;

Music supports and encourages movement;

Music taps into memories and emotions;

Music - and the silences within it - provide non verbal, immediate feedback;

Music is success-oriented - people of all ability levels can participate.

Who can benefit from Music Therapy?

Music therapy benefits everybody irrespective of age, gender, profession or any particular proclivity. You just have to be human to love, enjoy and be moved by music. For that matter, even animals and plants are known to be touched by music.

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Children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly with mental health needs, developmental and learning disabilities, Alzheimer's disease and other ageing-related conditions, those with substance-abuse problems, brain injuries, physical disabilities, and acute and chronic pain, including mothers in labour can all benefit. The list of those who can use it is endless and quite comprehensive.

Where do Music Therapists work?

In the West, music therapists work in psychiatric hospitals, rehabilitative facilities, medical hospitals, outpatient clinics, day-care treatment centers, agencies serving developmentally disabled persons, community mental health centers, drug and alcohol programs, senior centers, nursing homes, hospice programs, correctional facilities, halfway houses, schools, and private practice.

As one can see quite clearly, they are required everywhere. However, they are not conventional healing tools and are, at best, adjuncts. Music helps pamper the right environment and that is good enough.

What is the history of Music Therapy as a healthcare profession?

The idea of music as a healing influence that could affect health and behavior is as old as the writings of Aristotle and Plato. The 20th century discipline began in the West after World War I and World War II when community musicians of all types, both amateur and professional, went to veterans' hospitals to play for the thousands of

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veterans suffering both physical and emotional trauma from the wars. The patients' notable physical and emotional responses to music led the doctors and nurses to request the hiring of musicians by the hospitals. It was soon evident that the hospital musicians needed some prior training before entering the facility and so the demand grew for a college curriculum.

The world's first music therapy degree program was founded at Michigan State University, USA, in 1944. Music therapy did not emerge as an organized profession until 1950 with the establishment of the National Association for Music Therapy and, thereafter, the formation of the American Association for Music Therapy in 1971. The two associations merged in 1998 to form the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA).

Does research support Music Therapy?

The American Music Therapy Association promotes a vast amount of research exploring the benefits of music as therapy through publication of the Journal of Music Therapy, Music Therapy Perspectives and other sources. A substantial body of literature exists to support the effectiveness of music therapy. Apart from this, there is conclusive evidence that music therapy has existed in a lay form for centuries. Early man used it for every ritual. He instinctively understood its need and used it with fervor, discipline, care and purpose.

What are the Misconceptions about Music Therapy?

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Since music therapy isn't as yet a mainstream healing activity, it is looked at with a few misconceptions. But it is a fast evolving field and all misconceptions and myths are being blown away in the winds of acceptance and new discovery.

One misconception is that the patient has to have some particular music ability to benefit from music therapy. The fact of the matter is that musical ability or talent is not a prerequisite for benefiting from it. There is another misconception: there is one particular style of music that is more therapeutic than all the rest. This is also not true. All styles of music can be useful in effecting change in a patient's life. The individual's preferences, circumstances and need for treatment, and the patient's goals help determine the types of music a music therapist may use.

Music has a rhythm with a universal appeal and is beyond barriers of culture, creed, nationality and color.

Can healthy individuals use Music Therapy?

Healthy individuals can use music for stress reduction via active music making, such as drumming, as well as passive listening for relaxation. Music is often a vital support for physical exercise. Music therapy assists labour and delivery and may also be included in this category since pregnancy is regarded as a normal part of women's life cycles.

Music is a part of our lives. It is accessible to every creature created by Nature. One needn't fall ill to use it. A

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healthy lifestyle constitutes the wholesome use of music on an everyday basis.

What is the future of Music Therapy?

In western countries, particularly the United States, the future of music therapy is promising because state-of-the-art music therapy research in physical rehabilitation, Alzheimer's disease, and psychoneuroimmunology is documenting the effectiveness of music therapy in terms that are important in the context of a biological medical model. It has been proved beyond the pale of doubt that certain music therapy models have conclusive treatment benefits for specific problems.

Music therapy is finally being recognized globally. Newer concepts are emerging by the day, new vistas are beckoning and a whole new breed of therapists and new music therapy curricula are being forged by the minute. The future is exciting and alluring for anybody keen on traversing uncharted waters and making valuable music at the same time.