

Music Therapy

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What is Music Therapy?

Music therapy is a process through which interaction with a therapist in music-based experiences is designed to address specific needs of an individual with the goal of eliciting a desired change. Music therapy takes place with a specifically trained therapist and is based on careful assessment.

Who can provide music therapy services?

A trained music therapist who has completed at least a Bachelor's degree in Music Therapy and 1,200 hours of supervised clinical training in a broad range of settings—e.g. schools, hospitals, and psychiatric facilities—can provide music therapy services. Music therapy academic training consists of competencies in musical skills (e.g. voice, guitar and piano), music therapy methods, and psychology. Advanced levels of academic training—i.e. Master's and Doctorate—go deeper into the study of the areas of theoretical constructs in the field of psychology. These may include psychodynamic approaches, developmental psychology, biopsychosocial principles, music therapy theory, and methods of research. Music therapists are board certified. Certification is given when program requirements are met and the Board Certification exam is completed.

History of Music Therapy

The awareness of music as a powerful instrument of working towards wellness for an individual dates back to antiquity. However, music therapy as an academic field is a more recent occurrence. Music therapy emerged as a field in the 1940s, as many in the field of psychiatry began to view treatment in a more holistic way. One example of this is the prominent psychiatrist Karl Menninger, who aimed to address client needs through a wide variety of modalities. At this time music was recognized as containing essential elements of the therapeutic process, and through scientific-based research these qualities were confirmed empirically. In turn, music therapies gained acceptance into the medical field. Music therapy grew significantly during World War II, as music therapy practices were used in aiding veterans and seen as an invaluable resource in their recovery. Today, numerous music therapists work within a large variety of settings, from hospital to educational, as well as in private psychotherapy practices.

Who can benefit from music therapy?

Music therapy is used with children and adults with mental or physical disabilities, learning disabilities, Autism spectrum disorders, conduct or behavioral disorders, sensory impairments, substance abuse, survivors of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, brain injuries, mental illness, stroke, Alzheimer's, dementia, and individual in Palliative care. The theoretical orientation of music therapy will depend on the individual music therapist's background, as well as the client needs of the specific population. Applications may be oriented in a cognitive behavioral theoretical foundation or a psychotherapeutic theoretical foundation.

Interventions in music therapy

There is a wide range of music therapy intervention. Some of the main interventions include (but are not limited to): 1) *improvisatory music*: music is improvised using instruments and/or voice, body sounds, found objects, etc.; 2) *re-creative*: singing and/or playing pre-existing songs; 3) *composition*: the creation and documentation of a newly composed song by the client with the support of the therapist, or making changes, such as lyrics, in pre-existing songs; 4) *receptive*: listening to recordings of music.

Music therapy interventions are determined by client needs and are used to address the following: 1) to establish a means of communication and interaction; 2) to provide an outlet for self-expression; 3) to explore self/other relationships; 4) to develop creativity and spontaneity, stimulate sense, and develop perceptual and cognitive skills; 5) to develop sensory-motor skills, foster sequenced behaviors, enhance short-term and long-term memory; 6) to express and foster emotional integration; 7) to develop behavioral organizational skills; 8) to develop coping and self-reliance skills; 9) to develop problem-solving skills; 10) to develop and integrate and communicate inner experiences; 11) to integrate parts into whole; 12) to promote body awareness; 13) to develop auditory skills.

Music therapy for individuals with autism

Studies have shown that the use of music therapy has been beneficial to individuals with autism predominantly in terms of improved social and behavioral skills and interpersonal relationships (Goldstein 1964; Stevens and Clark 1969; Hollander and Juhrs 1974; Saperston 1973; Schmidt and Edwards 1976; Warwick 1995). Additionally, music therapy research has revealed improved communication and language skills as a result of music therapy treatment (Litchman 1976; Mahlberg 1973; Saperston 1973; Edgerton 1994).

The Music Therapy program at *A Total Approach*

The music therapy program at *A Total Approach* uses self-expressive arts—such as music, dance, and drama—to help children develop self-concept, social skills, verbal and non-verbal communication, self-reliance, coping skills, emotional awareness, integration and expression, and body awareness.

References

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