



## Music Therapy and Autism

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### What is Music Therapy?

Music therapy is an evidence-based allied health service similar to physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language pathology that uses music as the therapeutic tool to address physical, cognitive, social, emotional, psychological, spiritual, and/or behavior needs.

### Why Should I Try Music Therapy?

- Due to the motivational factors provided by music and the brain and body's response to music, music therapists can often gain unique outcomes.
- Research suggests that music is processed more successfully and more efficiently than speech in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Music can be a powerful motivator and a positive way to structure interaction and to encourage communication and expression for individuals with ASD.
- Music provides concrete, multi-sensory stimulation (visual, tactile, auditory, proprioceptive, vestibular), which can help to engage individuals with ASD and help them address sensory issues.
- Music is processed in both hemispheres of the brain, helping to remediate some speech and language skills and improve cognitive functioning.
- Movement in music and instrument playing can improve fine and gross motor skills, strength, and endurance.
- Music therapy provides opportunities for successful experiences by focusing on how strengths can be used to address each individual's specific needs.

### How Do I Know if Someone is Qualified to Provide Music Therapy Services?

- Qualified music therapists carry the credential **MT-BC** indicating that they have passed the national, independent certification board exam and have maintained awareness of current practice through continuing education or retesting. **DO NOT** work with anyone claiming to be a music therapist without the MT-BC designation.
- To confirm MT-BC status go to: [http://www.cbmt.org/certificant\\_search](http://www.cbmt.org/certificant_search)



## Client Benefits from Music Therapy

### Communication/Social Skills

- Help develop verbal communication, speech and language skills
- Increase appropriate social interaction such as joint-attention and turn-taking
- Stimulate speech
- Improve speech articulation
- Improve expressive and receptive communication
- Facilitate inclusion
- Encourage verbal and nonverbal social interaction
- Structure positive social interaction and decrease isolation

### Cognitive

- Improve sustained, selective, alternating, and divided attention
- Improve executive function skills such as organization, problem-solving, decision-making skills, reasoning, and comprehension
- Improve management of cognitive processes, such as working memory and planning
- Improve short- and long-term memory and recall
- Help develop academic skills

### Behaviors (Repetitive/Stereotypic)

- Help to reinforce desired responses
- Help reduce negative and/or self-stimulatory responses
- Encourage to attempt new tasks
- Improve inattentive behaviors such as restlessness, noisiness, and aggression

### Physical/Sensorimotor

- Enhance auditory processing and other sensory-motor, perceptual/motor, gross and fine motor skills
- Improve motor coordination
- Improve laterality (side-to-side movement) and directionality (up/down, right/left, back/forth movement)
- Help learn to tolerate and integrate auditory, visual, and tactile stimuli

### Emotional Regulation

- Improve ability to identify and appropriately express emotions
- Provide structure and sense of security
- Increase self-esteem
- Improve mood control and affective expression
- Decrease stress and anxiety
- Provide an outlet for safe self-expression