



Music Therapy and Children with Special Needs

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, and/or behavioral needs.

Why Should I Try Music Therapy?

- Due to the motivational factors provided by music and the way the brain and body respond to music, music therapists can sometimes gain positive responses where others are unable to reach them.
- Music therapists can complement and enhance the work of physical and occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, social workers, teachers, nurses, and other members of the interdisciplinary treatment team by collaboratively working on and reinforcing goals and exercises given by other disciplines, or providing the skills necessary to build up to the desired goals.
- Music therapy provides a natural, non-threatening, fun, motivating, and reinforcing way to address needs in all domains (physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral).
- Music stimulates all of the senses and involves the child at many levels. This “multimodal approach” facilitates many developmental skills.
- Because the brain processes music in multiple areas of both hemispheres, music can stimulate cognitive functioning and may be used for remediation of speech/language skills and physical development.
- Quality learning and maximum participation occur when children are permitted to experience the joy of play. Music therapy allows this play to occur naturally and frequently.
- Music therapy interventions are designed to be success-oriented making children feel better about themselves and allowing them to enjoy therapy.
- Music therapy can help a child manage pain and stressful situations; and encourage socialization, self-expression, communication, and motor development.



What Would My Child Do In A Music Therapy Session?

- The music therapist would design therapeutic music interventions to address nonmusical goals and needs.
- Therapeutic music interventions may involve a combination of playing instruments, movement, singing, musical games, writing songs, and/or other music-related interventions.
- The therapist would then help your child to transfer musical abilities back to nonmusical goals and functional life skills.

Family Involvement and Participation

- Siblings and/or parents are welcome in sessions. Family involvement provides opportunities for successful, positive interaction. It also provides an excellent way to learn effective ways to connect with your child outside of sessions and to encourage development.
- Since the ultimate goal of music therapy is to give children the tools to meet nonmusical goals outside of sessions, families are provided with tools to help transfer skills learned in sessions into daily life.
- While parents are welcome to join sessions, if they would like to use this time for respite, that is an option as well.

***For more information on Music Therapy or to
start Music Therapy sessions, contact:***