



Music Therapy and Developmental Disabilities

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 behavioral needs.

Why Should I Try Music Therapy?

- Music therapy can help improve cognitive abilities such as executive function skills, attention functions, and memory recall.
- Due to the way the brain and body respond to music and motivational factors provided by music, music therapists can sometimes gain positive responses when others cannot.
- Music therapy provides multisensory stimulation through tactile, auditory, and visual stimuli and helps to improve sensory processing and integration.
- Music therapy can help to improve strength, endurance, and fine and gross motor skills, which can help to increase independence and improve skills required for activities of daily living.
- Music therapy can provide a different way to express oneself and help to improve social communication skills.

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**
- Music therapists may carry the designation of Neurologic Music Therapist, which means that they have undergone additional training in this specific model of music therapy. Neurologic Music Therapist Fellow indicates that they have successfully passed advanced training and peer review of Neurologic Music Therapy techniques.
- It is highly recommended that those with neurologic issues work primarily with Neurologic Music Therapists.



Client Benefits from Music Therapy

Speech/Communication

- Improve breath support and voice volume
- Improve intelligibility/clarity of speech
- Improve articulation
- Stimulate speech
- Improve expressive and receptive communication

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

Physical

- Increase range of motion and flexibility
- Improve functional hand movements, finger dexterity, and limb coordination
- Improve laterality (side-to-side movement) and directionality (up/down, right/left, back/forth movement)
- Increase strength and endurance
- Improve fine motor skills and functional movement sequences that aid in activities of daily living
- Improve gross motor skills such as mobility, agility, and balance
- Improve posture and balance

Social/Emotional

- Increase appropriate social interaction
- Help develop positive relationships with peers and family
- Facilitate inclusion
- Structure positive social interaction and decrease isolation
- Provide opportunities for successful experiences
- Improve mood control and affective expression
- Improve reality orientation
- Decrease stress and anxiety
- Increase self-esteem
- Provide an outlet for safe self-expression
- Provide strategies to develop leisure skills