



The Impact of Music Therapy on Emotional Regulation

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What is therapeutic music vs music therapy?

Music is...

"an acoustic event involving specific combinations of sound moving over time."
-Barbara Crowe

Therapeutic Music is...

the prescriptive use of music to promote well-being or support health outcomes

Music Therapy is...

the clinical & evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program
-www.musictherapy.org

Why Music?

In **rhythm**, we find that drumming turns off the thinking mind and allows us to feel the primal knowledge in our bodies. In **melody**, we find that sounding our deep emotions transforms pain and despair and helps heal the heart. In **harmony**, we find that harmonizing with others turns off the "I" and activates the "we," transcending ego and filling the soul with unity. In **silence**, we find that quieting the mind deactivates our thinking about the past and future and allows the activation of peace and quiet.

–Christine Stevens

Functions of Music

- X Pleasure/Entertainment
- X Medicine
- X Support to basic humanity and culture
- X Worship
- X Communication
- X Effects on activity level



Music and Your Brain

Music activates every part of your brain and contributes to its neuroplasticity.

Neuroplasticity= Your brain's ability to bounce back after injury.



Brain Chemicals Affected by Music

- Dopamine (the reward chemical)
- Serotonin (the mood stabilizer)
- Oxytocin (the love/bonding hormone)
- Endorphin (the pain killer)

Brain Waves Stimulated

- Delta waves (sleep)
- Theta waves (relaxed)
- Alpha waves (calm)
- Beta waves (alert)
- Gamma waves (thinking/working)

Group Music Making

- Empathy Circuits Improve
- Oxytocin (love/bonding) Secretion
- Dopamine Release (Reward and Motivation)
- Language Structures Improve
- Cortisol Decrease





(Some) Benefits of Drumming

- Strengthens the Immune System
- Releases endorphins, enhancing the brain's pleasure centers
- Reverses stress on the genomic level
- Grounds a person into the body and the present moment
- Offers creative expression
- Improves mood states and reduces burnout
- Promotes emotional insight and release
- Reduces feelings of alienation and isolation
- Increases self-awareness and self-esteem
- Promotes self-assessment and self-realization

Ways You Can Use Drumming

- Drum Circle
- Drum to music
- Drum Talk
- Affirmations



Benefits of Singing

- Lower stress levels
- Strengthen the immune system
- Increase pain threshold
- Improve snoring
- Improve lung function/respiration
- Enhance memory
- Alleviate grief
- Improve mental health and mood
- Improve speaking abilities
- Decrease depression through the release of endorphins
- Improve mental alertness



Ways You Can Use Singing

- Sing Blues
- Sing Affirmations
- Sing along with recorded music
- Make up other songs
 - Original Songs
 - Parodies



Coping Skills Using Music

Strategies to Reduce Overwhelm and Increase Self-Regulation

Regulate Emotions through Rhythms and Melodies

Use the Iso-Principle

- Use music to get from one emotion to another. Example: If you are angry, play angry music and then slowly move to a different emotion that you want to feel, such as calm or happy.
- Make playlists for different emotions.

Create Personal Retreats Through Musical Breaks

- Play an instrument
- Sit and listen to music
- Have a dance party
- Participate in yoga with music
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation with music
- Songwriting such as fill-in-the-blank

Facilitate Communication

- When a person is frustrated or has another emotion that makes it difficult to communicate verbally, communicating through drumming can be effective.
- Grab a couple of drums and have a conversation using the drums.
- Take turns drumming back and forth.
- Match the energy of the other person.

Aid in Transitioning

- Switching between different tasks or roles can be particularly challenging. Using music as a transition signal can help signal the brain that it's time to shift gears.
- Whether it's a brief instrumental interlude or a favorite song that signifies a change in activity, these musical cues can smoothen the process and reduce feelings of overwhelm.



"Music is as innate as the rhythm of your heart, as close to your being as the hum of your soul, and as intrinsic as the silent space between each breath. Release any limiting beliefs you have about your own inner musical spirit and recognize that in all the elements of music, you will find a gateway into the healing benefits of sound."

-Christine Stevens

Recommended Books

There's a Song For That: Lessons Learned from Music and Lyrics: A Music Therapist's Memoir and Guide by Julie Hoffer

Music Medicine: The Science and Spirit of Healing Yourself with Sound by Christine Stevens and Joan Borysenko Ph.D.





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Music Therapy

C O M P A N Y

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