



# Anderson Music Therapy Services

Facilitating Positive Change Through Music

## MUSIC THERAPY & MENTAL HEALTH

### *What Is Music Therapy?*

Music Therapy is the clinical and 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. It is an established health service similar to occupational therapy and physical therapy and consists of using music therapeutically to address physical, psychological, cognitive and/or social functioning for patients of all ages. Because music therapy is a powerful and non-invasive medium, unique outcomes are possible. In addition to its applications in mental health, music therapy is used successfully in a variety of healthcare and educational settings.

### *How Does Music Therapy Make A Difference with Mental Health?*

“Research shows the benefits of music therapy for various mental health conditions, including depression, trauma, and schizophrenia (to name a few). Music acts as a medium for processing emotions, trauma, and grief—but music can also be utilized as a regulating or calming agent for anxiety or dysregulation” (Warren, 2016). The directed use of music and music therapy is highly effective in developing coping strategies, including understanding and expressing feelings of anxiety and helplessness, supporting feelings of self confidence and security, and providing a safe or neutral environment for relaxation. Research and clinical experiences attest to the viability of music therapy even in those who are resistive to other treatment approaches. Music is a form of sensory stimulation, which provokes responses due to the familiarity, predictability, and feelings of security associated with it.

### *How Does Music Therapy Help Those Affected By Mental Health Conditions?*

Music therapy for clients with mental health concerns use musical interaction as a means of communication and expression. The aim of therapy is to help individuals develop relationships and address issues they may not be able to address using words alone. Music therapy sessions include the use of active music making, music listening, and discussion. A coordinated program of music and music therapy interventions in response to crisis or trauma, designed and implemented by a qualified music therapist, provides opportunities for:

- Non-verbal outlets for emotions associated with traumatic experiences
- Anxiety and stress reduction
- Explore feelings and therapeutic issues such as self-esteem or personal insight
- Make positive changes in mood and emotional states
- Have a sense of control over life through successful experiences
- Enhance awareness of self and environment
- Express oneself both verbally and non-verbally
- Develop coping and relaxation skills
- Support healthy feelings and thoughts
- Improve reality testing and problem solving skills
- Interact socially with others
- Develop independence and decision making skills
- Improve concentration and attention span



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- Adopt positive forms of behavior
- Resolve conflicts leading to stronger family and peer relationships
- Positive changes in mood and emotional states
- Active and positive participant involvement in treatment
- Enhanced feelings of control, confidence, and empowerment
- Positive physiological changes, such as lower blood pressure, reduced heart rate, and relaxed muscle tension

## ***What Do Music Therapists Do?***

Music therapists use music and music therapy interventions, both instrumental and vocal, designed to facilitate changes that are non-musical in nature. The professionally trained music therapist utilizes individualized music experiences and interventions to assess, treat, and evaluate patients. Frequently functioning as members of an interdisciplinary team, music therapists implement programs with groups or individuals addressing a vast continuum of outcomes, including reduction of anxiety, stress management, communication, and emotional self-expression.

There are four major interventions involved with music therapy:

### **1. Lyric Analysis**

While talk therapy allows a person to speak about topics that may be difficult to discuss, lyric analysis introduces a novel and less-threatening approach to process emotions, thoughts and experiences. A person receiving music therapy is encouraged to offer insight, alternative lyrics and tangible tools or themes from lyrics that can apply to obstacles in their life and their treatment. We all have a song that we deeply connect to and appreciate—lyric analysis provides an opportunity for an individual to identify song lyrics that may correlate with their experience.

### **2. Improvisation Music Playing**

Playing instruments can encourage emotional expression, socialization and exploration of various therapeutic themes (i.e. conflict, communication, grief, etc.). For example, a group can create a “storm” by playing drums, rain sticks, thunder tubes and other percussive instruments. The group can note areas of escalation and de-escalation in the improvisation, and the group can correlate the “highs and lows” of the storm to particular feelings they may have. This creates an opportunity for the group to discuss their feelings further.

### **3. Active Music Listening**

Music can be utilized to regulate mood. Because of its rhythmic and repetitive aspects, music engages the neocortex of our brain, which calms us and reduces impulsivity. We often utilize music to match or alter our mood. While there are benefits to matching music to our mood, it can potentially keep us stuck in a depressive, angry or anxious state. To alter mood states, a music therapist can play music to match the current mood of the person and then slowly shift to a more positive or calm state.

### **4. Songwriting**

Songwriting provides opportunities for expression in a positive and rewarding way. Anyone can create lyrics that reflect their own thoughts and experiences, and select instruments and sounds that best reflect the emotion behind the lyrics. This process can be very validating, and can aid in building self-worth. This intervention can also instill a sense of pride, as someone *listens* to their own creation. (Warren, 2016)



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## ***Who Is Qualified as a Music Therapist?***

Graduates of colleges or universities from more than 70 approved music therapy programs are eligible to take a national examination administered by the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT), an independent, non-profit certifying agency fully accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies. After successful completion of the CBMT examination, graduates are issued the credential necessary for professional practice, Music Therapist-Board Certified (MT-BC). In addition to the MT-BC credential, other recognized professional designations are Registered Music Therapists (RMT), Certified Music Therapists (CMT), and Advanced Certified Music Therapist (ACMT) listed with the National Music Therapy Registry. Any individual who does not have proper training and credentials is not qualified to provide music therapy services.

## ***Where Do Music Therapists Work?***

Music therapists offer services in medical hospitals, skilled and intermediate care facilities, rehabilitation hospitals, adult day care centers, senior centers, hospices, psychiatric treatment centers, drug and alcohol programs, schools and other facilities. In crisis situations, it is important for music therapy services to be available and accessible to the community in need. Music therapists mobilize to provide services locally, working in schools, hospitals, community centers, corporate offices, senior centers, universities and colleges, etc. Some music therapists are self-employed and work as independent contractors, while others may be full or part time employees.

## ***What Research and Resources are Available to Substantiate and Support Music Therapy?***

Music therapy research published in the Journal of Music Therapy, Music Therapy Perspectives, and other peer-reviewed journals, including the Cochrane Review explore the benefits of music therapy with children and adults.

For more information, contact us at the email below and we will send you specific research on your area of interest.

## ***Want More Information? We would love to talk!***

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