

What is music therapy?

Music therapy is a form of treatment that uses music to treat certain problems. Music therapy may help a child:

- explore and express feelings
- raise self-esteem
- make positive changes in moods, emotions, and behavior
- Improve awareness of self and environment.
- learn coping and relaxation skills
- interact socially with others
- improve concentration, attention span, and memory
- develop motor skills.

How does music therapy work?

Music affects many senses and involves the child at many levels. This is called a "multi-modal approach". The effect of music depends on pitch, volume, harmony, melody, and rhythm.

The pitch is produced by the number of vibrations, or frequency, of the sound. Fast vibrations, or high frequency, can make a child nervous. Slow or low frequency vibrations have a calming effect.

Loud volume of music may feel comforting for some. For others, loud volume can create stress. A soft volume may soothe, or it may irritate a child who prefers a high volume.

Harmony and melody may be used to relate to happy, sad, or angry feelings.

Rhythm affects the human heartbeat. Rhythm can make you excited, nervous, or deeply relaxed. As the body gets relaxed, the mind is able to concentrate more easily. Music may be used to help treat some speech and language problems. Rhythm also supports and encourages movement.

What happens during a typical therapy session?

The music therapist first observes how the child behaves and interacts with others. The therapist looks at:

- communication skills
- motor skills
- social and emotional skills
- musical skills
- styles of music and kinds of instruments that will work best for the child.

The therapist plans a treatment program that may involve singing, listening, moving, playing, and other creative activities.

Music therapists may work with healthcare providers, psychologists, occupational and physical therapists, and speech/language pathologists.

Music therapists may also suggest ways to use music with the child at home.

For more information, call the American Music Therapy Association at 301-589-3300 or visit their Web site: <http://www.musictherapy.org>