WHAT IS MUSIC THERAPY?

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Definition

“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.”

- Addresses physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs
- American Music Therapy Association
Music Therapists...

- Have a music therapy degree (bachelors or higher)
- Experienced 1200 hours of clinical training
- Hold the MT-BC credential (and a license if required by the state)
- Studied courses in psychology, medicine, and music

(AMTA)
History of Music Therapy in the US

- Music as healing has existed for millennia
- Veterans who were traumatized after WWI and WWII
- Hospitals continued hiring musicians to help elicit physical and emotional responses from patients
- First music therapy program was founded in 1944 (Michigan State University)
- The National Association for Music Therapy & the American Association for Music Therapy merged in 1998 = American Music Therapy Association (AMTA)
# Music Therapy

**is**

- Assisting patients with their recovery and with decreasing pain
- Promoting healthy functioning in older adults with dementia or Parkinson's
- Working with people with psychosis or mood & anxiety disorders to manage mood and improve coping skills
- Working with people with autism to improve communication and interpersonal skills
- Assist healthy development in pediatric patients or patients with developmental disabilities

**is not**

- A hospital with bedside musicians
- Nurses or physicians playing background music or giving a patient an iPod with favorite songs
- A music relaxation CD
- Volunteers playing music in a hospital lobby
- A music performance

(AMTA)
Music Therapy Methods

1. Improvisation
2. Song recreation
3. Songwriting
   - Lyric substitution
4. Receptive methods
   - Lyric Analysis
   - Music-assisted relaxation
   - Music and imagery
Experiential
Why does music therapy work?

Neurological perspective
- Nonthreatening way of accessing primitive brain structures
- Rhythmic music synchronizes with neurons firing in brain stem
- Music increases oxytocin levels and decreases cortisol levels in brain
- Music synchronizes people: promotes empathy and social bonding
- Music can refocus attention away from pain
- Promoting language development in infants by supporting vocalization
- Accesses many types of memories
- (Rigby, 2015)

Psychodynamic perspective
- Bringing unconscious to conscious
- Therapeutic relationship
- Music can bypass verbal/conscious content to access the unconscious
- Music bridges the unconscious and the conscious
- (Wheeler, 1981)
- Music-making can be interpersonal and can facilitate a group process or therapeutic relationship (Cassity, 1976)
Prescriptive music vs preferred music

- Familiar music evokes emotional safety
  - *We are connected to our favorite musicians*
- Listening to unfamiliar music involves a learning curve, especially as we get older
- Neural pruning in our teenager years relates to our current musical preference
- Balance between complexity/novelty & familiarity
  - *Violations keep us interested, but too many violations is unpleasurable*
- (Rigby, 2015)
References


