



Senior Series

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and Ohio Aging Network professionals



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Music Therapy

Music therapy is the clinical use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals that address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs. According to the American Music Therapy Association's web site (www.musictherapy.org), the idea that music could serve a healing purpose has been around for centuries. However, it was not until the late 1950s that the discipline of music therapy was formally developed and first recognized in this country after doctors and nurses in veterans' hospitals noticed positive physical and emotional responses evoked by injured soldiers, after musicians played for them.

Music therapists are trained to assess the strengths and needs of each client and to provide indicated

treatment by creating, singing, moving to, and/or listening to music. Through musical involvement, in a therapeutic context, an individual's abilities are strengthened and transferred throughout other areas of life. Essentially, music therapy can improve the quality of life for persons throughout the lifespan, despite diversity, disability, or illness. Music therapy interventions can be designed to:

- promote wellness
- manage stress and anxiety
- alleviate pain
- express feelings
- enhance memory and retrieval
- improve communication
- decrease frequency and duration of aggressive or agitated behaviors
- promote physical rehabilitation

- increase self-awareness
- motivate change and personal growth
- reinforce self-identity and self-worth
- alter mood
- encourage meaningful social interaction and emotional intimacy
- empower individuals and decrease feelings of helplessness
- foster successful experiences and a sense of control over life

Research highlights music therapy's usefulness specifically in working with older adults, as well as their families and caregivers. Music therapy has been proven to successfully address psychological, social, physical, and cognitive needs associated with aging issues. In addition, music therapy literature and research indicates effectiveness specifically in working with those who have suffered from strokes, or those who have Alzheimer's or other dementias.

Overall, music therapy offers a unique treatment approach, as music is a normal part of many facets of life. As a result, music therapy provokes unique responses and positive outcomes due to the sense of familiarity, predictability, and feelings of security associated with

music. Research indicates that music therapy is a viable treatment mode even for those who have no musical background or for those who have been resistive to other treatment approaches.

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