



What to Expect from Music Therapy?

Music therapy provides several non-musical goals and skills for a client. Music therapy offers goals in several different areas, depending on the needs of the individual and the direction of the therapy. These goals, objectives and outcomes are created specifically for the client.

When using music as a tool to achieve a goal, you can focus on many areas. A client may benefit from cognition, motor (gross & fine) skills, socialization, behaviours, mobility, communication, and emotional development. Music therapy and teaching music are different. A music teacher may have goals based on musical 'talent' or 'skill level.' A music therapist supports whatever level the individual is at and uses this level therapeutically to better their well being. A music teacher's goal may be to gain musical knowledge and skills or to perform a piece of music by a certain timeframe. Rules may be strict and have a focus on teaching curriculums. A music therapist may have a similar goal in mind if it benefits the client. It would also support the client's needs and learning style physically, emotionally, musically, creatively and academically. A music teacher has different training and skills whereas a music therapist has training and experience to work with people who have special needs or disabilities.

Music therapy uses academic elements to achieve a goal but the approach is different. A music therapist will assess the needs of a client and precisely where the client's ability levels are. The therapist will also adapt and support the program for the individual to achieve his/her goal in a timeframe that is specifically tailored for the individual. When emotion and creative self-expression is included in music, guided and supported by a trained music therapist, academic goals may be achieved as well. You may also incorporate adapted music teaching in a therapy session if this is what the client needs. Examples may include learning a music rhythm, different notes of a music scale, gross and fine motor skills in new and different ways, using a singing voice (aural skills) and/or a new instrument in a healthy safe way.

Music therapy is a total body exercise for the client. Music activates all parts of the brain simultaneously, which is the unique property of music. This brain exercise can be quite exhausting, and downtime after a session is recommended. Giving the brain time to process and rest once having worked so hard promotes a healthy, growing brain to function at its best. One of the amazing features of music therapy is how many muscles are activated. When using one's voice and the body physically, simultaneously, many core and limb muscles are engaged. The rib cage and all muscles between each rib expand as each inhaled breath is taken. Abdominal muscle strength is needed from the lower abdomen up to the throat to push the air and project the voice on each exhaled breath. Breathing and singing are extremely powerful for core muscle strength. If you associate this with instrument playing and/or body movement, the entire body's muscles are engaged.



“Music therapy is the intentional use of music by a university-trained professional who is registered with the Australian Music Therapy Association Inc. Registered music therapists draw on an extensive body of research and are bound by a code of ethics that informs their practice.

Music therapists incorporate a range of music-making methods within and through a therapeutic relationship. Music therapy is different from music education and entertainment as it focuses on health, functioning and wellbeing. Music therapists are committed to supporting people of any age and ability regardless of musical skill, culture or background.”

Australian Music Therapy Association (2016)

The power of music is endless. New relationships are created, new emotions are formed, new physical experiences occur. Music transforms us to another place of imagination, exhilaration and joy. Negative moods may be altered to positive moods by music and therefore music is a powerful motivator to achieve goals.

Music therapy is growing in popularity as time moves forward. As music therapy is further researched, more benefits are discovered for individuals of all age groups, abilities and special needs. There is evidence that a traditional music educational setting is not the beneficial approach for all individuals. If the power of music is the focus, a music therapist can nurture an individual to maximise his/her strengths. Progress and achievements may be seen in a vast number of areas.

