MUSIC THERAPY IN RESPONSE TO CRISIS AND TRAUMA

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 the structured use of music to assist people of all ages in times of need. A well-established, healthcare profession, music therapy uses carefully selected music and music interventions to address physical, emotional, cognitive and social needs. While music therapy will not cure or solve problems brought on by crisis, music therapy can help children and adults in crisis learn and use positive coping skills and express difficult feelings and emotions. Because music therapy is a powerful and non-invasive medium, unique outcomes are possible.

How Does Music Therapy Make A Difference In Response To Crisis Situations?
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 results and clinical experiences attest to the viability of music therapy even in situations outside of traditional therapeutic settings. 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 Crisis Or Trauma?
Music therapy has been shown to have a significant effect on an individual’s relaxation, respiration rate, self-reported pain reduction, and behaviorally observed and self-reported anxiety levels. 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
- 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

In addition, music therapy may allow for:
- Emotional intimacy with peers, families, caregivers
- Relaxation for family groups or other community and peer groups

Meaningful time spent together in a positive, creative way
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. Music therapy programs are based on individual assessment, treatment planning, and ongoing program evaluation. 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.

Why Music Therapy?

"Music therapy enables people to sometimes put words together in ways that are hard for them to do otherwise. ...The music seems to get through to the patient and in many ways it enables [the patient] to get through to us which [may be] very hard to do with any other modality."

- Susan Shurin, MD

"Families reported having reclaimed a sense of joy through participation in a music activity with one another."

- Music Therapy Institute, Westchester, NY

"Music gives all a chance to express ourselves, to share our souls, to share our feelings with each other."

- Participant, Nordoff-Robbins Center for Music Therapy

"...[in music therapy] We learned not to keep in your feelings or else your stomach will twist in knots and you will get very hurt..."

- Fourth Grade Student

"Thank you for helping me to understand everything...You taught me to cool down when I was mad. You taught me to solve my problems. You were there when I needed help. The music that played soothed my pain. When I was feeling sad, you were always there to comfort me. I could talk to you about anything."

- Fourth Grade Student

INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM

American Music Therapy Association
8455 Colesville Road, Suite 1000
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Phone: (301) 589-3300
Fax: (301) 589-5175
Web: www.musictherapy.org
Email: info@musictherapy.org