

Benefits of Music Therapy for Older Adults



According to the Administration on Aging (AOA), there are currently over 54 million adults over the age of 65 in the United States and this number is expected to exceed 80 million by 2040. Because older adults often experience a wide range of age-related health conditions, there is a growing need for a more holistic model of services which address multiple areas of healthcare concerns.

Music therapy is recognized by the Older Americans Act of 1992 as a support and preventative health service, defined as the "use of musical or rhythmic interventions specifically selected by a music therapist to accomplish the restoration, maintenance, or improvement of social or emotional functioning, mental processing, or physical health of an older individual."

A Board Certified Music Therapist has training in evidence-based therapeutic activities to address the health goals of older adults in a way that is measurable and covers multiple domains, including:

Cognitive

Music has been shown to assist in maintaining memory organization and thought processing, as well as provide reality orientation to surroundings. Sensory training through music can help maintain contact with the environment through the senses.

Speech and Communication

Participation in music has been shown to help maintain or slow the regression of speech and communication in areas of both expressive and receptive communication, including oral motor, sequencing, phonemic awareness, speech intelligibility and patterns of language.

Physical and Motor Skills

Through active instrument play, dance, and musical movement activities, music can help improve range of motion, strength, and coordination. Additionally, music has been shown to reduce the perception of pain and the need for pain medication.

Social and Emotional

Music increases bonding and cooperation in social interactions, which can provide relief from feelings of isolation and loneliness. There is evidence that group bonding may be a primary factor in overall health. It has been effectively used to reduce anxiety and depression and can facilitate the expression of emotions for non-verbal individuals.



Benefits of Music Therapy for Caregivers and Staff

With an aging population and a growing shortage of care staff, there is a need to improve employee retention rates. The use of music therapy for staff can assist in stress reduction, morale, and team building through direct staff interventions as well as through an overall healthier support of residents and increased positive interactions.

Music therapy can support the goals and mission of individual facilities and health care agencies by helping to provide an additional dynamic and holistic support system. In contrast to other therapies, music therapy is able to address all areas of functioning, thereby potentially reducing overall costs.

Services Available

Individual Sessions

Music therapy can help individuals in their home with personal goals towards maintaining independence, as well as those in care facilities who would benefit from private music therapy sessions.

Group Sessions

Group sessions are available for assisted living, memory care, and community locations. Small group music therapy sessions can provide support for the overall health and community goals of residents working on specific needs.

Staff Support

Short group team building, and stress reduction sessions are available for staff and caregivers upon request.

*Additional research and information can be found through the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) at musictherapy.org or the Administration on Aging (AOA) at acl.gov/about-acl/administration-aging, or by visiting melodicjourneys.com.

