



Music Therapy...

A Successful Inclusion Model for Children in Group Foster Care



Music therapy for at-risk youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is essential to their cognitive development, emotional stability, and social well-being. Numerous studies reveal what Grandma's Place recognized intuitively. We combine daily activities with a variety of music, as well as a therapeutic music program twice weekly, customized especially for our ASD children. Music soothes the mind, warms the heart, and assists in interactive group or individual learning. Comments from students, caregivers, and parents alike attest to the benefits of music therapy, even for those who are non-verbal.

- ◆ **"Music is fun,"** echoed by the majority of our children.
- ◆ **"The kids are focused and energized,"** says a volunteer
- ◆ **"She loves her music and has her favorites (helps calm herself),** declares an anonymous parent.
- ◆ **"In a group sing-a-long, some ASD kids are shy, but warm up quickly, and can more easily transition to the next event,"** states a caregiver.
- ◆ Observation reveals that the children look forward to their specialized music therapy, **"which encourages social interactions, reduces anxiety, and also improves behavior and communication,"** declares a Music Therapist (MT).



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Deliverables to Substantiate Autism Speaks Grant

A sampling of reports compiled through confidential case records, during a period in 2016, give evidence of progress in individual children through customized music therapy at Grandma's Place, Royal Palm Beach, Florida. The documented case records of 15 patients (multi-ages, multi-gender) surveyed were obtained from mixed groups, toddlers, mixed group music/art, and four individual patients, on ten different days. Four components record each youth's interactions: intervention engaged in by patient, intervention employed by music therapist, outcomes of the intervention, and a narrative of the experience, listed below in Figure 1 and Figure 2. At this writing, these interventions are not all inclusive or exclusive of the methods and approaches engaged in, employed by, or resulting in the success or failure of the project, nor is it limited to the current modalities facilitated by the current or future MT. It is commendable that great progress is evident within this period and is exemplary of the professionals involved.



Intervention Engagement by Patient and

Intervention Employment by Music Therapist

Therapeutic Singing
Song Choice
Music Making & Improvisation
Active Listening (recorded & live music)
Passive Listening
Relaxation
Musical Entertainment
Song-Writing & Lyrical Analysis
Motor Movement
Creative Arts
Toning
Cognitive Training
Story Telling
Verbal Processing
Promote Appropriate Behavior
Increased Verbal Skills
Increase Communication & Social Skills

Fig. 1

Resulting Outcomes

Physical/Motor
Emotional
Cognitive
Social Interaction
Family Support
Comfort Support
Recreational
Creative Expression
Reminiscence
Increased Communication
Sensory Motor Stimulation
Emotional Identification
Other—Turn Taking, Impulse Control,
Self-Regulation

Fig. 2

Other—Kinesthetic Interventions

Session Outcomes Synopsis

The overall main objective of the music therapy program is to provide coping tools for daily living for the ASD patients in Grandma's Place. The goals for this objective follows is obtained by:

- ***Maximize academic and interpersonal success***
- ***Inclusive tutoring and personalized attention***
- ***Minimize lapses in educational support and social development***
- ***Interactive inclusive with all peers***

The desired results of the above goals are evident throughout the MT's reporting session comments, expressed below.

- ***Improved focus, cooperation, engagement, attention, responsiveness, interaction***
- ***Increased self-awareness, self-expression, expression of thought, emotion recognition, positive attitude, cooperation***
- ***Initiate critical thinking, process session experience, give and receive feedback***
- ***Ability to create a visual image of their desired future in a positive manner and verbally express thoughts on how to achieve same***

Normally, music therapy works best when an environment is not so varied, void of a wide range of ages, stages, or circumstances. It is remarkable that these patients make significant progress through an inclusion program. It may be easier to have separate sessions for those patients of differing abilities, yet it would not resemble the life they will necessarily live in. Neither would it be advantageous to separate their average-ability peers from ASD patients. Whereas, research shows that regressive behavior or low self-esteem may initiate in average-skilled verbal peers, it is not holistically beneficial to separate one group from another. Normal childhood behavior, such as rudeness or rivalry is common in any family throughout the world. The common ground found in music is therapeutic to all, bringing out the similarities within the diversities. A sense of community through interactions is the relationship building that occurs in any society. The future of all children is in our hands, as someday our lives will be in their hands. It takes time to develop which individual or group works best together, to maximize the program's benefits in the environment of an emergency foster care setting. ***"It take a village to raise a child."***



For the preparations of this report by:

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