

Music Therapy

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“Metaphor of the brain is a comparison to an orchestra. An orchestra is made up of 50 musicians and one conductor, who controls the whole symphony. Well, for a person with ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), their conductor is drunk,” said Dan Hansch, Learning Disabilities Specialist and Counselor at LBCC. “The orchestra is full of wonderful musicians, but the symphony is terrible if the conductor is messed up.”

The characteristics of a person with ADHD are inattention, hyperactivity and

impulsiveness. The symptoms include anxiety, depression and uncontrollable behavior. Many parents whose children are diagnosed with ADHD are faced with the decision of how to treat the problem. They often turn to prescription drugs as the only available option. What most families facing this dilemma don't know is that there are plenty of drug-free therapies out there.

Music therapy, otherwise known as healthy music or biofeedback, is a new treatment for patients with ADHD. This treatment

appears to be unknown by a majority of those living with the condition, but is emerging as a cutting-edge solution for those with the disability, as well as for those challenged by eating disorders, depression and high stress levels. “It (the disability) affects their ability to use their working memory that is the part of the memory that processed information and makes it harder to get information processed and stored,” Hansch said.

Music therapy targets the places in the brain responsible for sending brain signals that control the ability to focus, work and learn. The sounds a patient will experience contain binaral beats that carry different frequencies played separately in each ear. Binaral beats release healthy neurotransmitters through brain wave patterns, which help a person relax, focus, and even sleep better. During music therapy, the tranquil sounds allow a patient to feel at total peace, alleviating pain and stress without a single dose of medicine. The mind comes alive with every word and sound the music creates and the signals force the heart, body and mind to slow down. High pitch sounds and drum-beats soon combine with the heart rate.

Common medications prescribed to treat ADHD are formulated to increase or balance levels of neurotransmitters. Music therapy does the same, but without the risk of dependency or withdrawal.

This “healthy music’s” frequencies are identified and measured by our four primary brain waves; beta, alpha, theta and delta. Beta is connected with the normal awake state. Alpha is the relaxed state, which puts one in touch with their spiritual awareness. Theta is the dream state or state of the unconscious mind. And

Delta is related to deep, dreamless sleep and total loss of body awareness.

A number of well-known celebrities use this therapy as a source of meditation and focus. U.S. Olympian, Michael Phelps, winner of eight gold medals, made an appearance at the 2008 Video Music Awards on MTV introducing rap artist Lil’ Wayne. “Music was my accomplice in Beijing. Every time I walked out to the pool I was blasting music to put me in the zone,” said

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Phelps, who struggled with ADHD as a child. In an interview for MTV, Phelps elaborated on the subject and revealed that he discovered at an early age that oral medications were not for him and instead sought out natural ways, such as music therapy, to control his symptoms.

Music therapy provides a patient with soothing sounds and spoken words providing motivation and promoting wellness. Though much is still being discovered about alternate methods of treatment for ADHD, music therapy alleviates pain and calms a person who is hyperactive by lowering the heart rate and other uncontrollable body reactions. Most importantly, music therapy is proven to help a child focus without the use of unnecessary medications.