

Using Music Therapy to Reach Developmental Goals

Children of all abilities and ages can benefit from music therapy. Music therapy is used to help children work toward individual developmental goals and improve life skills. Children can use music to learn academic, social, emotional, communication and physical skills. They learn by filling in the last part of a sentence, creating new words to a familiar tune, repetition and rhythm of a song. Below are tips to help find ways to incorporate music therapy into your child's life.

Create Smoother Transitions

Whether your goal is to get one child into the car seat or an entire classroom to line up and walk down the hall, singing a simple song can make the situation easier. Create a song about the specific activity or use a song which the activity should be completed by the time it ends.

Use Familiar Tunes

Use familiar tunes from your childhood, such as "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star," "Head Shoulders Knees and Toes," etc. Change the lyrics to fit the situation. For example the tune of "Mary had a Little Lamb" can be sung as "Take a book and put it on the shelf, put it on the shelf, put it on the shelf, take another book and put it on the shelf, it's time to clean up now."

Repetition, Repetition, Repetition

Many academic skills can be taught through music, (for example, the ABCs). The more times it's heard, the quicker it will be learned.

Play the Name Game

Incorporate the child's name into a song to help create a positive self image for the child.

Be Creative

Music provides building blocks for creativity by asking for the child's input. For example, ask the child "Should we play fast or slow, loud or soft?" You are showing the child that he/she has a voice and his/her ideas matter.

Variety is Key

Variety is key during early childhood development. It's important to share many different styles of music: vocal, instrumental, classical, as well as music from other countries. Lively tempos and louder volume tend to increase the energy level, while softer, slower music has a calming effect. Choose music based on your desired outcomes.

Utilize Libraries

Libraries are great resources. Before spending money on CDs, check them out from the library to see which ones are best received by your child.

Provide Positive Rewards

Following a difficult or less preferred activity, schedule a specific time to sing, dance or play an instrument together with your child. You don't have to have fancy instruments. Simply make a tambourine out of two paper plates and some seeds.

Use Music for Relaxation

During stressful situations, turning on some soft music can relax child and caregiver.

These tips were compiled from a variety of sources. For more tip sheets, visit www.fraser.org.