



Trauma is defined as an overwhelming event that causes intense feelings of fear, helplessness or horror. There are many different kinds of trauma and not everyone responds the same way to a traumatic event. Trauma affects individuals, families and communities. It disrupts healthy development, adversely affects relationships and contributes to mental health issues including substance abuse, domestic violence, and child abuse. Everyone pays a price when a community produces multi-generations of people with untreated trauma by an increase in crime, loss of wages, and threat to the stability of the family. Based on the modern understanding that trauma is a whole-body experience, music therapists have a unique opportunity to support trauma recovery through sensory, neurologic, physiologic and psychological processes.

### **Impact of the music therapy work:**

- The use of music in a trauma-focused healing environment is very different from an environment of leisurely listening to music. Sounds, music, tones in voices, images, even the time of day can be triggers for the victim. The training of the MT-BC makes them uniquely qualified to address sensory-stimuli and avoid contraindications.
- Music Therapists are trained in how music functions in the brain and therefore are able to determine when music can be contraindicated (examples: "background music" or generic "relaxation music" can be upsetting if abuse happened in the night or in times reserved for calm and relaxation.
- Drum circles can be very loud and cause remembrances or reactions to gunshot sounds or violence.)
- Elements of music introduced by a board-certified Music Therapist are processed all over the brain. Building neurological resources within the child's brain assists in creating healthy new coping skills.
- Music Therapy helps the child return to a normal school day and a changed family environment. The child obtains increased resources for emotional regulation, reduced anxiety, coping with triggers, and processing the changes in their lives through a safe and enjoyable music atmosphere and the use of trauma informed music therapy interventions.
- Music Therapy can be directed to help increase confidence in communication and emotional expression. The increased ability to communicate thoughts and feelings is one of the most important tools a child or teenager can possess; to decrease the chances of future victimization and ensure their ongoing health care and safety after a trauma occurs. If they do not tell or they cannot communicate what they are feeling to a safe adult, we cannot provide safety, healing or justice.
- Music therapists work together with counselors and other therapists to provide community healing and individual and family treatment with survivors of natural disasters. MT-BC's treat victims of child abuse in Children's Advocacy Centers, military veterans and at risk youth.

### **Research Articles:**

- Blank. Child Advocacy Centers in the United States and Music Therapy: Relationships in the Making. *Voices* 2018, 18(4). <https://doi.org/10.15845/voices.v18i4.2589>
- Schönfeld, V. (2012). "Promise to take good care of it!" Therapy with Ira. In K. E. Bruscia (Ed.), *Case examples of music therapy for survivors of abuse* [Kindle version, location 2108–2420]. Gilsum, NH: Barcelona.