

Understanding the benefits of music for young people and how to have a conversation about it

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH MUSIC

A resource created by music therapists for clinicians working in youth cancer

WHAT IS MUSIC THERAPY?

Music therapy is a research-based allied health profession that uses music as the primary therapeutic modality within a therapeutic relationship. Registered Music Therapists (RMT) are university-trained professionals who creatively plan musical experiences to help people manage the physical and emotional aspects of their health, functioning and wellbeing. Individuals do not need to be musical to benefit from or participate in music therapy.

WHY MUSIC AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

Music consumption peaks in adolescence and it is at this time that young people start to actively pursue their musical interests. Music becomes an important aspect of identity formation and is often utilised as a coping mechanism throughout the adolescent years. Music is both accessible and enjoyable for young people and can be a powerful tool when applied within a therapeutic relationship.

HOW DOES MUSIC THERAPY WORK IN YOUTH CANCER?

Music therapists help young people to make use of music as a health-oriented resource by offering a range of musical experiences within a therapeutic relationship to address clinical goals. Experiences include: songwriting, improvisation, instrumental lessons, 'jamming' and using pre-recorded music. Sessions may explore aspects relating young person's cancer journey, such as adjustment to diagnosis, coping with treatment demands, identity and self-expression.

WHEN TO REFER TO A MUSIC THERAPIST

Music therapy can be beneficial for young people with cancer in many ways. Some of the reasons you may refer to a music therapist include: if a young person is struggling with anxiety or low mood, struggling to cope with their current situation, requires procedural support, is feeling isolated or having difficulty during a long admission.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Understanding a young person's connection with music is one way of learning their language and gaining insight into how music is used in their everyday life. Conversations about music provide a platform for exploring how music may influence a person's emotions, identity and connectedness, as well as how it may be a helpful tool in coping with the emotional and physical stress of a cancer diagnosis.

PROMPTS

It can be difficult to know how to begin a conversation about music with a young person. Here are some conversation prompts to help you get started:

- "What kind of music do you like?"
- "How do you usually use music?"
- "What do you notice about yourself when you use music in this way?"
- "Is music a regular part of your day?"
- "Do you share music with others?"



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

Now that you have started a conversation around music with a young person, where to next? On this page is a range of resources for clinicians as well as tools and further information about the field of music therapy.

YOUNG PEOPLE, MUSIC & WELLBEING

Description: Created by YCS Music Therapists for young people, this resource shares tips on using music for everyday wellbeing. This may be used alongside the conversation starters.

Go to: https://www.canteen.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/YCS-Music-Therapy-Resource_Young-People-Music-and-Wellbeing_v.1Aug200824.pdf

TUNE IN NOT OUT

Description: Tune In Not Out is a website specifically designed for vulnerable young people and offers a range of resources including fact sheets, music playlists and shared stories.

Go to: <https://tuneinnotout.com/mental-health/music-and-our-mental-health/>

TUNE YOUR MOOD

Description: Tune Your Mood is a youth health initiative that promotes engagement with young people and young people's own uses of music in their everyday life.

Go to: <http://www.tuneyourmood.com/>

HEALTHY & UNHEALTHY USES OF MUSIC SCALE

Description: The HUUMS is an assessment tool created by Registered Music Therapists to assess a young person's use of music in relation to their mental health.

Go to: http://www.tuneyourmood.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/HUMS-Appendix-2015-Child_and_Adolescent_Mental_Health.pdf

RELEVANT ARTICLE AND RESEARCH

Description: O'Callaghan, C., Barry, P., & Thompson, K. (2012). Music's relevance for adolescents and young adults with cancer: A constructivist research approach.

Go to: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s00520-011-1104-1.pdf>

