

Music Therapy Techniques to Improve Communication Skills in Persons with Autism

Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC
Farlow Music Therapy Services
Fort Wayne, IN
www.farlowmusictherapy.com



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007

Music Therapy...

... is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program.

(American Music Therapy Association definition, 2005)



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007

Requirements to be certified as a music therapist:

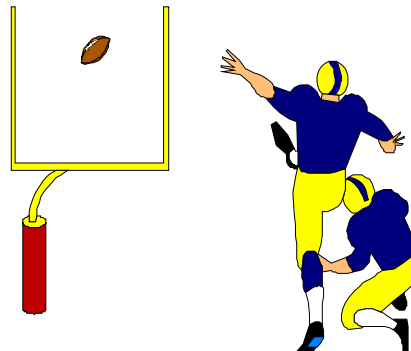
- Bachelor's degree in music therapy (or equivalent coursework)
- 6-month internship
- National board certification exam
- Maintain 100 CE credits every 5 years



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007

Non-musical goals:

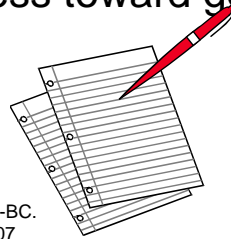
- Cognitive
- Academic
- Motor
- Emotional
- Social
- Leisure



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007

What do music therapists do?

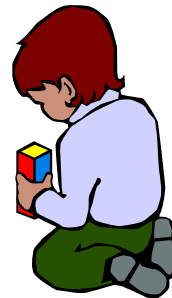
- Assess client's needs
- Determine appropriate goals
- Identify objectives
- Plan & conduct therapy activities
- Document clients progress toward goals
- Provide follow-up



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007

Children with autism experience impairments in...

- Social relationships and social interactions
- Verbal and nonverbal communication
- Often exhibit restricted and repetitive patterns of behavior



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007



Why music therapy for children with autism?

- Show a preference for musical stimuli
- Find repetitive elements appealing
- Fosters creativity and self-expression
- Music affects the whole person (cognitive, physical, neurological, & emotional areas)



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007



Benefits of music therapy for people with autism:

- Deals with concrete concepts
- Promotes emotional communication through verbal and non-verbal means
- Promotes social interaction
- Provides both structure and freedom
- Stimulates many senses
- Highly motivational
- Promotes joint attention



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007



Music therapy goals for children with autism:

- Increase tolerance of stimuli
- Promote verbal/non-verbal dialogues
- Increase self-expression
- Develop spontaneity and flexibility
- Decrease obsessive behaviors
- Increase awareness of others



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007



Music therapy techniques:

- **Repetitive patterns:** *offers security*
- **Melodic phrases:** *anticipates actions*
- **Active silences:** *elicits response*
- **Vocal improvisations:** *fosters vocal communication*
- **Instrumental improvisations:** *encourages non-verbal communication*
- **Carrier of Information:** *teaches needed skills*



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007



Alexa – 5-year old female

Weaknesses

- Short attention span
- Doesn't initiate conversation
- Uses 1-2 word phrases to answer questions
- Doesn't participate in group activities

Strengths

- Speech is clear and understandable
- Good academic skills
- Good fine/gross motor skills
- Able to maintain attention when paired with singing



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007



Alexa

- Four in a Boat – *greeting responses*
- What Do You Do? – *question/answer responses*
- The Best Helper 🗣️ – *social/peer interaction*
- Leader of the Band – *turn taking and leader/follower roles*



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007



Noah – 8-year old male

Weaknesses

- Gives 1-2 word responses to questions
- Doesn't initiate conversation
- Exhibits poor conversation skills

Strengths

- Speech is understandable
- Good academic skills
- Able to quickly remember lyrics and musical phrases



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007



Noah

- Getting to Know Someone 🗣️ – *eye contact and question/answer responses*
- Pentatonic bell improvisation – *listening and expressive skills, joint attention*
- You Go First 🗣️ – *increase awareness of others*



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007



Tuned In To Learning written by Michelle Lazar, MT-BC and Jeremy Jensen, MM, MT-BC

- “Tuned in to Learning: Volume I, Social Skills & Pragmatics for Autism and Related Needs”
- Copyright 2005 Tuned in to Learning
- P.O. Box 221016, San Diego, CA 92192
- 1-877-TUNED-IN
- www.tunedintolearning.com



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007



All That I Can Be written by Sally K. Albrecht and Jay Althouse

- *All That I Can Be: 15 Unison songs to Build Character and Integrity in Young People*
- Copyright 2002 by Alfred Publishing
- P.O. Box 10003, 16320 Roscoe Blvd., Van Nuys, CA 91410-0003
- www.alfred.com



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007



Mark – 9-year old male

Weaknesses

- Poor social and verbal interaction skills
- Poor academic skills
- Whines and makes up stories at inappropriate times

Strengths

- Creative imagination
- Enjoys singing
- Motivated to participate in music activities



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007



Mark

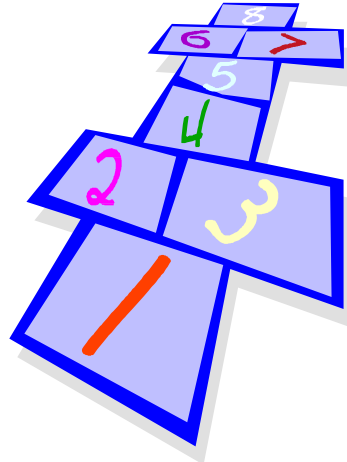
- I Have a Word and I Can Spell – *encourages vocalizations*
- Singing/Reading to a familiar tune - *encourages speech fluency*
- Things I'm Thankful For – *encourages self-expression*



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007

Example of music therapy session:

- Hello Song 📢
- Pass It Along 📢
- Tone Chimes
- Good-bye Song



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007

Finding a music therapist

- Contact the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) at findMT@musictherapy.org or
- *American Music Therapy Association, Inc.*
8455 Colesville Road, Suite 1000
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, USA
Phone: (301) 589-3300
Fax: (301) 589-5175



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007



References

- Alvin, Juliette. (1991). Music Therapy for the Autistic Child. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Edgerton, C. (1994) The effect of improvisational music therapy in the communicative behaviors of autistic children, *Journal of Music Therapy*, 21, 31-62.
- Filipek et al, (1999) The screening and diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorders, *J Aut Dev Dis*, 29, 439-484.
- Gold, C., Wigram, T. & Elafani, C. (2006) Music therapy for autistic spectrum disorder (Cochrane Review). The Cochrane Library, Issue 2, 2006 Chichester, UK, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Trevarthen, Colwyn, Aitken, Kenneth, Papoudi, Despina & Robarts, Jacqueline. (1996). Children with Autism: Diagnosis and Interventions to Meet Their Needs. Jessica Kingsley Pub, Bristol, PA.



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007



A Special Thanks to ...

Holly D. Sokol, M Ed, MT-BC, NMT

*Southwest Autism Research & Resource Ctr
Phoenix, AZ www.autismcenter.org*

*for making arrangements for the use of a
guitar and electric keyboard for this
presentation.*



Peggy A. Farlow, MAE, MT-BC.
ASA conference July 2007