



# EMPOWERING LIVES THROUGH MUSIC

## **Music Therapy for Teens and At-Risk Youth** **An overview for this population and 10 ideas for ongoing sessions**

Music therapy (MT) harnesses the energy of music for the benefit of everyone. In our sessions, we'll play together, rap, sing, share, and have fun together in a safe environment. MT will address the issues of adolescence to benefit: social skills, relating to peers, emotional stability, positive body image, self-esteem, bullying, personal safety, and coping with more complicated relationships. Participants will work together as a group to explore these issues and grow trust in one another. JAB has worked with tweens, teens and at-risk youth for over 25 years. He is a nationally Board-Certified Music Therapist and an international performing and recording artist.

In addition to the topics detailed below, each session will open with a "Check-in" song, followed by an ice-breaker as transition, and close with a "See ya later" song. With at-risk youth, MT will address issues such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy, illicit activities and delinquency. In every minute of each session, MT will guide the group using a wide array of evidence-based activities, instruments, and mediums with music favored by the group to encourage the most successful outcome.

**Idea 1 - Building rapport.** Interactive drumming, "beat play" and "sing/fun" exercises are used to build trust and foster rapport.

**Idea 2 - How do we use music?** MT will play a variety of songs and styles as group uses worksheets to monitor heart and breathing rates, tension, mood and memory. MT leads/guides group discussion.

**Idea 3 - Lyric analysis.** Using a song chosen by the group, MT plays the song live. Group talks openly about passages that speak to them. MT facilitates and guides discussion. Group develops coping skills.

**Idea 4 – Let's write a song!** After improvisation and riffing on themes initiated by the group, MT will lead group members in composing an original song with themes chosen by them.

**Idea 5 – Guided meditation and/or Progressive Muscle Relaxation.** These two well-known, successfully documented activities promote relaxation and calmness. MT leads on guitar or keyboard, with script.

**Idea 6 - Non-verbal cues.** Tone, facial expressions, gestures, body posture and pitch of voice -- what do these cues say about us and how can we read them to respond to others. Practice in pairs. Example: 1. Looking at each other with no words or gestures. 2. Now include gestures. 3. Include "tonal speech" and gestures. Play improv game using above situation to describe location, occupation, object.

**Idea 7 – Rhythmic patterns.** Group playing drums. Listening to patterns and repeating. Listen and repeat "phrases" from the group. Decipher rhythms in "Number Games."

See also "What is Music," "Uncovering the Melody of Our Lives," and "Finding Joy in Everyday Life" sessions.

**Plus frequent revues** Including key coping strategies and favorite activities. Establish intentions for moving forward as a group.

