

Supporting Regulation and Shared Attention to Facilitate the Foundations for Development of Children and Adolescents with Complex Individual Profiles

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Abstract : This presentation demonstrates the effectiveness of music therapy in co-treatment with speech pathology and occupational therapy as an innovative way when working with children and adolescents with complex individual differences to facilitate communication, emotional, motor and social skills development. Each child with special needs and their carer has an individual profile which encompasses their visual-spatial, auditory, language, learning, mental health, family dynamic, sensory-motor, motor planning and sequencing profiles. The most common issues among children with special needs, especially those diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder, are in the areas of regulation, communication, and social-emotional development. The ability of children living with challenges to communicate and use language and understand verbal and non-verbal information, as well as move their bodies to explore and interact with their environments in social situations, depends on the children being regulated both internally and externally and trusting their communication partners and understanding what is happening in the moment. For carers, it is about understanding the tempo, rhythm, pacing, and timing of their own individual profile, as well as the profile of the child they are interacting with, and how these can sync together. In this study, music therapy is used in co-treatment sessions with a speech pathologist and/or an occupational therapist using the DIRFloortime approach to facilitate the regulation, attention, engagement, reciprocity and social-emotional capacities of children presenting with complex individual differences. Documented changes in 10 domains of children's development over a 12-month period using the Individual Music Therapy Assessment Profile (IMTAP) were observed. Children were assessed biannually, and results show significant improvements in the social-emotional, musicality and receptive language domains indicating that co-treatment with a music therapist using the DIRFloortime framework is highly effective. This presentation will highlight strategies that facilitate regulation, social-emotional and communication development for children and adolescents with complex individual profiles.

Keywords : communication, shared attention, regulation, social emotional

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