

# SELECTION OF MUSIC FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MOVEMENT

Skilled movement is based on underlying rhythms and tempos in the body. Therapy to enhance movement abilities is often more effective when music accompanies the movement. Here are some guidelines for selecting music for a movement program.

- Music selections should be clear and rhythmical. They should not contain a great deal of fancy elaboration and instrumentation. They should be performed as straight-forwardly as possible, emphasizing a basic rhythm and melody that are strong and uncluttered. Many variations in tempo are appropriate. Syncopation and irregularity in the underlying rhythm pattern should be avoided. We are striving for a clearer rhythm pattern in the child's movement. The structure of the music should mirror the type of movement being worked on.

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- Music should have a rhythmical structure and tempo which meet the needs of the individual child. A tape with slower songs and rhythms might be developed for a child who needs a slower response time for postural reactions. Baroque classical music or folk dance music could be used in place of songs with lyrics. Instrumental music is less distracting for some children and is more appropriate if you wish to incorporate visual and movement imagery with the movement. It is often easier to create custom-made tapes for a child or group of children than to find a commercial tape or record that is totally appropriate.
- Music should be conducive to health and growth. Despite its popularity with today's children and adolescents, rock music should be avoided during treatment sessions. There is

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data to show that the irregular rhythm of rock music has a negative effect on growth (in plant research), that it weakens muscle responses, and that it reduces the amount of coordinated activity of the hemispheres of the brain. The precise structure of Baroque music, on the other hand, has been associated with greater growth and health (in plants), and with accelerated learning. This type of music can be used as an initial background for movement awareness or to provide a background for sensory integration activities that create the foundation for movement facilitation.

- Folk music can be extremely effective. It contains many themes of interest to children (i.e., animals, people, humor) and utilizes a simple melody structure with rhythmic repetition of melodic and lyric phrases. Folk music should be selected that contains a sincere feeling tone and an underlying honesty and respect for children. This is often identified intuitively rather than through a logical sequential analysis of the song. Most traditional folk songs have withstood time and many generations of children and adults who have loved them and sung them. Many of these songs are already familiar to the adult who is working or playing with the child. Contemporary songs composed in a folk style are also appropriate. It is important to sense whether the song was written as an expression of childhood and a knowledge and appreciation of children, or whether the underlying theme is simply to teach something with music. Many of the songs written for straight educational purposes lack the spark and feeling tone of pleasure and playfulness that is communicated by the more traditional folk song. Some music written directly for children is patronizing or overly "cute". An emotional tone of respect for the child and the sheer enjoyment of the music are crucial.
- If you wish to develop taped materials for your program, the following suggestions and observations will be helpful:
  - Determine the kind of music that is appropriate for one or more of the children with whom you work. Assess the initial needs of your program. It is not necessary to create a full program immediately.
  - Begin listening to different types of music that would be appropriate. Listen first at an intuitive, feeling level for what the specific piece has to offer. Move with the music and let it create images for you. Imagine yourself moving with children to the music. Listen again to the music with a more analytical ear. What does it have to offer a specific child or family in your program? What is the tempo? the rhythm? the theme of the song?
- Broaden your exposure to music that is available in your community. Check listings of specific compositions, records, and artists in books or articles on the therapeutic use of music. Begin to listen to selections on recordings borrowed from your library or school or in your own tape or CD collection. Include music from the cultural traditions of the children and families with whom you are working.
- Create several custom tapes for your program from tapes or CDs that you have purchased. These may include songs or instrumental pieces from a single tape or artist, or may include a mixture of artists and recordings. Consider your purposes for creating the tape as you decide whether a given song or composition belongs on the tape. For example, you may wish to begin a tape with slow-to-moderately paced music that has a clear steady rhythm. The slow tempo and steady rhythm lends itself well to activities that build postural tone and stability. Add additional songs that create an appropriate background for more complex movement and coordination. These songs may be interspersed with slower tempos and with songs which are specifically appropriate for building and steadying postural tone. As overall movement control improves throughout the first half of the tape, songs can be added that include active vocalization, play with the mouth, gestures, or use of a communication board.
- Customized song sequences can also be developed by programming the order of songs on a CD.
- Explore the use of the new tape or song sequence with specific children. You will gain a clearer sense of which materials work for you and for the child. Look for an overall pleasurable response from the child. The child may become more playful and willing to work and play with you as the tape is playing. He or she may become more alert to a specific song. There may be smiling, vocalization, increased relaxation, or increased body movement with the music. Watch for an increase in endurance and tolerance in treatment. The child may be able to focus on activities for longer periods and have more energy and stamina. Touch and

movement may be accepted more readily with the music. You may observe a child become more interactive and communicative when the tape or specific songs are used during the session.

- As you use the tape or CD, make written notes of the types of activity that seem particularly appropriate with each song. This written listing can be typed and given to parents, teachers or other therapists who are using a copy of your tape with the child.