

## 2021 Pierce County Caregiver Conference: “Using the Gift of Music.”

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## Close your eyes, please ... and listen

- 3 variations of the theme
- How did each variation affect you?



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## Many Benefits of Music

- Reduce stress
- Reduce anxiety
- Reduce depression
- Reduce agitation
- Reduce distress
- Trigger memories
- Help the effectiveness of pain medication
- Regulate blood pressure and pulse rate



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## Music can help!

- Help us communicate (vs “word salad”)
- Lighten our mood
- Get us up and moving
- Relax us to sleep with a lullaby



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## Comments:

- Bring moments of joy with music
- Live music = personalized attention, music tailored for the listener, improved resonance
- Sing/whistle throughout the day’s tasks (whenever possible). Use recorded music as backup.
- Is a Thanksgiving feast or chicken soup better for someone who is ill?



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## Resources

- **Handout from the National Standards Board for Therapeutic Musicians**  
In Workshop Materials section, <https://www.piercecountywa.gov/7157/Caregiver-Conference-2021>
- **Cheryl Zabel, Certified Music Practitioner**  
Music sessions — In-person OR via Zoom  
[cz56cmp76@icloud.com](mailto:cz56cmp76@icloud.com)  
253-307-0999
- **Other Certified Music Practitioners:**  
<https://www.mhttp.org/find-a-certified-music-practitioner-cmp>

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**Thank you!**

**Questions and Answers:**

(If more time needed, answers to audience questions will be added to the website information for the 2021 Pierce County Caregiver Conference: "Using the Gift of Music.")

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# Frequently Asked Questions About Therapeutic Music

Prepared by the National Standards Board for Therapeutic Musicians (NSBTM). <https://www.nsbtm.org/>

## What is Therapeutic Music?

Therapeutic music is live music, played or sung, and is specifically tailored to the patient's immediate need. It is an art based on the science of sound.

## What Does a Certified Therapeutic Musician Do?

A certified therapeutic musician uses the inherent healing elements of live music and sound to enhance the environment for patients in healthcare settings, making it more conducive to the healing process.

## How is a Recipient's Environment Enhanced?

A certified therapeutic musician enhances the environment by applying therapeutic music.

- The **intention** is to promote healing—as opposed to curing—by bringing the body, mind, and spirit into balance. Healing is a holistic view of human health pertaining to all aspects of the human being—mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual wholeness – not just the physical aspect. Curing is done by doctors and mainstream, or allopathic, medicine.
- The music affects the whole-person because the effects are four-fold:
  - Physical
  - Emotional
  - Mental
  - Spiritual
- Music is often provided one-on-one in practice.
- The **purpose** is to provide a healing environment, not to entertain or to give a performance.

## Who Benefits from Therapeutic Music?

Those who commonly greatly benefit are persons experiencing life's transitions, such as birthing and dying, and those experiencing illness, injury, physical, and/or emotional pain. This might include babies in NICU, patients in hospice care, people recovering from strokes and other traumatic brain injuries, and adults and children coping with life-threatening or emotional crises. Facility staff and family members accompanying the patient also benefit from the music.

## What Are the Benefits of Therapeutic Music?

Benefits can include, but are not limited to:

- Distraction
- Disassociation from the present situation
- Refocus of attention
- Altering the sense of time
- Reprieve from the present situation
- Relieving anxiety of the critically ill
- Reducing stress and blood pressure of the chronically ill
- Augmenting pain management
- Bridge for communication between loved ones

## Continuing Situational Benefits of Therapeutic Music

- o Relieving physical and mental tension of the pre-surgery patient
- o Accelerating physical healing of post-surgery and injured patients
- o Easing the birth delivery process
- o Aiding mental focus in Alzheimer's patients by lifting and clearing the consciousness
- o Assisting the dying by facilitating ease in the transition process

## What Is a Typical Therapeutic Music Session Like?

The certified therapeutic musician is trained to assess the patient's behavior, condition, and communication ability in order to meet the patient's immediate needs with appropriate therapeutic music.

- o Music might be familiar or unfamiliar, structured (such as written tunes) or improvised, using rhythmic or non-rhythmic tempos, depending on the situation and the patient's needs.
- o In working with the mood of a patient, the therapeutic musician might play music which falls into three types: merry, sad, or soothing.
- o Playing in different modes (Ionian, Mixolydian, Dorian, and Aeolian) is also helpful in meeting the patient's needs.

## How Are Certified Therapeutic Musicians Trained?

Accredited therapeutic music training programs can be classroom-taught, online with some on-site requirements, or self-paced home-study with no travel requirements.

The following programs are **accredited** by the National Standards Board for Therapeutic Musicians (NSBTM). Students receiving certification through one of these programs have met a common set of accreditation standards set by the NSBTM which includes an extensive curriculum, such as demonstrating musical proficiency and completing at least 45 hours of hospice/hospital playing at the bedside. All of the accredited programs assign mentors or advisors to work with students.

- o **Bedside Harp** [www.bedsideharp.com](http://www.bedsideharp.com)
- o **Clinical Musician Certification Program** [www.harpforhealing.com](http://www.harpforhealing.com)
- o **International Harp Therapy Program** [www.harptherapyinternational.com](http://www.harptherapyinternational.com)
- o **Music for Healing and Transition Program** [www.mhtp.org](http://www.mhtp.org)

There are other therapeutic musician programs which are recognized by health care organizations in their locale, but which for various reasons are not nationally accredited. Therapeutic musician training programs **affiliated** with the NSBTM include

- o **GentleMuses** in Boston, Massachusetts [www.gentlemuses.org](http://www.gentlemuses.org)
- o **HealthCare Harps Institute, LLC** in Alta Loma, California [www.healthharp.com](http://www.healthharp.com)
- o **Vibroacoustic Harp Therapy** in Macungie, Pennsylvania [www.musiatry.com/vibroacoustic-harp-therapy.html](http://www.musiatry.com/vibroacoustic-harp-therapy.html)

## Why is Live Music Preferred?

There are many benefits from live music personally provided by a certified therapeutic musician.

- o There is no substitute for personal attention.
- o A certified therapeutic musician is trained to immediately modify the music to best meet the patient's needs in the current moment.
- o Live acoustic music contains a richer spectrum of vibrations and harmonics because it is not compressed and digitized like recorded music.

## Where Do Certified Therapeutic Musicians Work?

Certified therapeutic musicians work in a wide variety of healthcare settings, but they are found primarily at the bedside of patients in healthcare environments including hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, treatment centers, nursing homes, hospice, and palliative care facilities. In the hospital, they might work in areas that include pre-operative care, recovery, ambulatory care, extended care, emergency room, surgical intensive care, intensive care, neonatal intensive care, pediatric, psychiatric, dialysis, and cancer treatment units. Certified therapeutic musicians might also work in massage, yoga, meditation, physical therapy centers, educational institutions, chiropractic offices, dental offices, veterinary clinics, or animal shelters.

## What Are Some Misconceptions About Therapeutic Music?

In contrast to the idea of being an entertainer, certified therapeutic musicians have completed an extensive training program which holds high standards for each graduate and meets the NSBTM accreditation standards. In contrast to the idea that one type of music fits all, certified therapeutic musicians determine the types of music used based on the circumstances and unique needs of the individual patient.

## Is There Research to Support Therapeutic Music?

The documented effects of music on mood and physiology date back to the ancient Greeks, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. Today the effectiveness of music as a healing modality has been well-documented in music therapy, music-medicine, nursing, psychology, and other scientific landscapes.

Several controlled studies have been published that demonstrate the efficacy of live, therapeutic music in decreasing pain and anxiety, and in regulating heart rhythms. Additional information about research results can be found on these websites:

- [www.nsbtm.org/research-resources/related-research/](http://www.nsbtm.org/research-resources/related-research/)
- [www.mhpt.org/research.aspx](http://www.mhpt.org/research.aspx)
- [www.soothingharp.com/Research-on-therapeutic-music.html](http://www.soothingharp.com/Research-on-therapeutic-music.html)
- [www.vibroacousticharp.com/research.html](http://www.vibroacousticharp.com/research.html)
- [www.spiritualityhealth.com/articles/ease-suffering-music](http://www.spiritualityhealth.com/articles/ease-suffering-music)

## What Is the Difference Between a Music Therapist and a Certified Therapeutic Musician?

**Music therapy** is prescriptive, interactive, and requires a 4-year college degree. The *music therapist* uses musical instruments and music making as therapeutic tools primarily to rehabilitate the normal functions of living and improve quality of life through studying and promoting measurable changes in behavior.

**Therapeutic music** is non-prescriptive, passive, and requires a certification. A *certified therapeutic musician* uses the artistic application of the intrinsic elements of live music and sound to provide an environment conducive to the healing process.

## Who is Qualified to Practice Therapeutic Music?

Musicians who complete a therapeutic musician training program accredited by the National Standards Board for Therapeutic Musicians (NSBTM) are qualified to practice as certified therapeutic musicians. Certified graduates are required to enhance their proficiency with continuing education units (CEUs), obtaining credits through private study or participation in conferences, workshops, lectures and/or webinars on a variety of approved topics relevant to the field of therapeutic music.

## **What Is the National Standards Board for Therapeutic Musicians (NSBTM)?**

The NSBTM is a governing body for accredited programs that graduate certified therapeutic musicians. Its purpose is to develop and advance the profession and practice of therapeutic music. The organization's website includes information about the field of therapeutic music, accredited training programs, and resources and events related to therapeutic music. Affiliated NSBTM memberships are available in categories of education, service placement, and healthcare. [www.nsbtm.org](http://www.nsbtm.org).

## **How Are Certified Therapeutic Musicians Paid?**

Each healthcare facility funds therapeutic music differently. Funds can come out of the budget of a particular department, from the facility's foundation, auxiliary, or special fund or grant sources. Some certified therapeutic musicians work as employees, others are in private practice.

## **What Is the Future of Therapeutic Music?**

Nearly all certified therapeutic musicians were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020.

Some were able to continue providing therapeutic music in facilities, while others were not allowed to have any on-location access to patients. Those who were unable to play at the bedside were playing in more public indoor and outdoor areas such as entryways, hallways, lobbies, and nurse's stations, utilizing on-line platforms to deliver live therapeutic music remotely, or recording music tailored for specific patients.

The importance of real-time interaction between the patient and the certified therapeutic musician cannot be overstated. No recording or relaxing music channel can immediately adapt the music to meet the personal preferences or immediate needs of a patient. A live, interactive certified therapeutic musician is necessary for the maximum benefit of therapeutic music. The absence of a live therapeutic musician during COVID-19 was keenly felt by patients and staff.

At the time of this writing facilities are welcoming certified therapeutic musicians back, but with heightened awareness of the importance of stringent sanitation and healthcare protocols for the protection of patients, staff, and musicians. Musicians who deliver therapeutic music at the bedside might be required to utilize masks and personal protective equipment, and great attention is given to sanitizing instruments before and after bedside therapeutic music sessions.

Since the inception of the therapeutic music field in the early 1990's, hundreds of well-trained and certified therapeutic musicians have served humanity and made a difference in the comfort care of patients. Many healthcare facility administrators recognize the significant benefits that live therapeutic music brings to their patients, families, staff, the organization's reputation, and enhanced patient satisfaction. Facilities also recognize the need for musicians to be trained and certified in order to understand and follow proper protocols for the protection of the patients, staff, and musician.

The practice of therapeutic music is expanding beyond the clinical setting. Therapeutic music can be utilized in offices, veterinary clinics and shelters, yoga and meditation centers, and many other locations where relaxation and stress relief will increase performance, satisfaction, and overall health. On-line platforms are also making it possible for certified therapeutic musicians to bring live therapeutic music to people who are home-bound or in remote locations. The possibilities are endless.

This FAQ sheet has been prepared by the National Standards Board for Therapeutic Musicians (NSBTM).  
<https://www.nsbtm.org/>