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THE SOUND OF CONCENTRATION

*How Music Enhances Focus for
Children with ADHD*

LAURA SEYMOUR

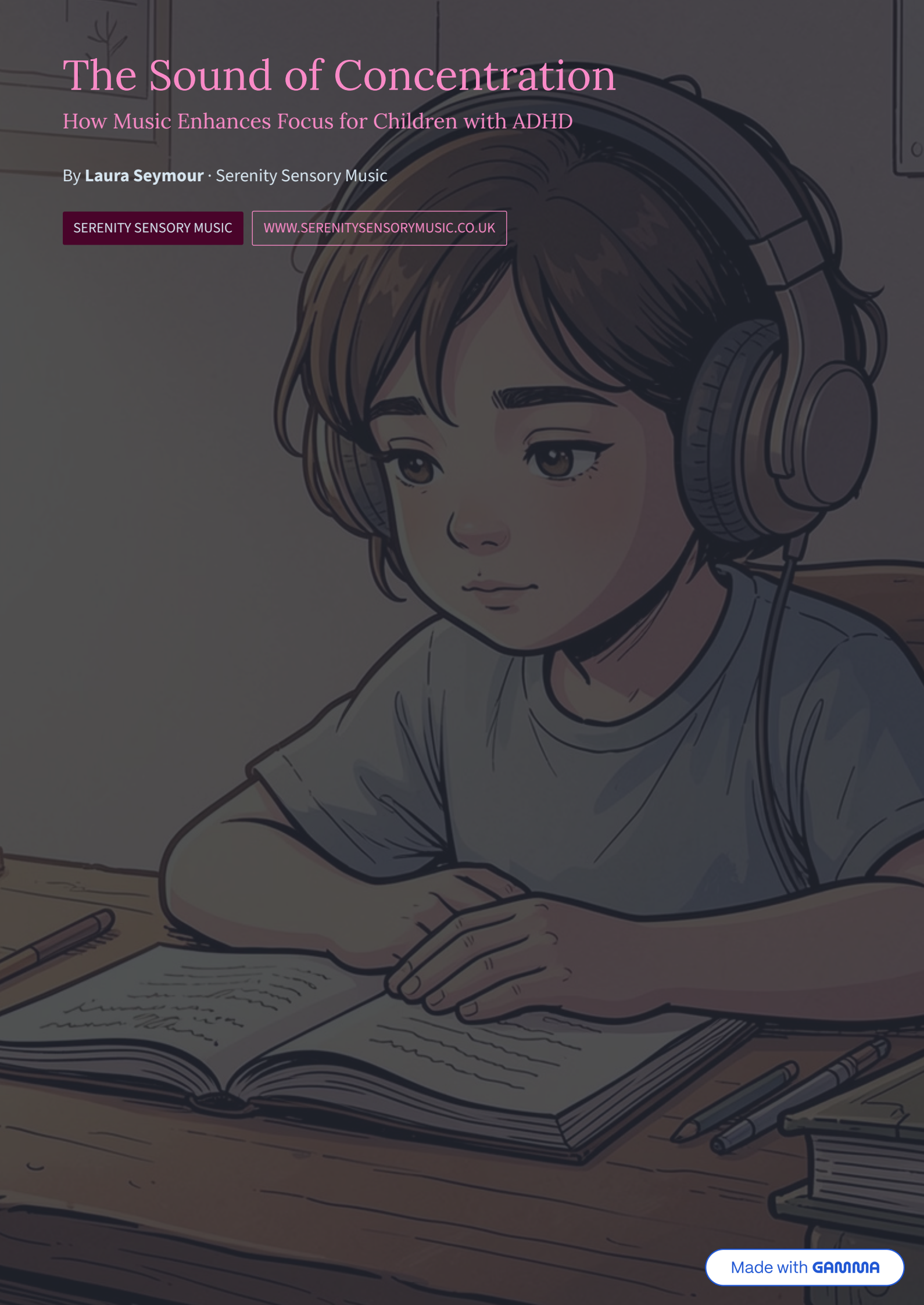
The Sound of Concentration

How Music Enhances Focus for Children with ADHD

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What's Inside This Booklet

This booklet explores how music can support children with ADHD to focus, engage, and thrive. Each chapter builds on the last, offering practical strategies you can begin using at home or in the classroom today.

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❏ **Did You Know?** Music is one of the few stimuli that activates nearly every area of the brain simultaneously, making it uniquely powerful for supporting attention, memory, and emotional regulation.



Introduction

For many children with ADHD, concentrating on tasks can feel like an uphill battle. It is not a matter of laziness or poor behaviour. Attention is shaped by brain development, sensory processing, emotional wellbeing, and the environment around us. When these systems are overwhelmed or under-stimulated, focus becomes incredibly difficult to sustain.

Children with ADHD often experience challenges with working memory, task initiation, emotional regulation, and filtering out distractions. Yet these same children can demonstrate remarkable concentration when engaged in activities they find meaningful or stimulating. This is not inconsistency. It is a reflection of how the ADHD brain processes motivation, novelty, and sensory input.

Music offers something remarkable. It provides structure and predictability while remaining engaging and enjoyable. It can calm an overstimulated nervous system or energise one that is under-aroused. Through therapeutic music-making, sensory music experiences, and carefully chosen listening strategies, children can begin to access their strengths and develop personalised tools for focus and learning.

"Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything."

Attributed to Plato



Understanding Attention and ADHD

Attention is not a single skill. It encompasses several different types, including **sustained attention** (staying on task), **selective attention** (filtering distractions), and **divided attention** (managing multiple demands). Children with ADHD may struggle with any or all of these, depending on context, motivation, and sensory environment.

How ADHD Affects Concentration

- Difficulty filtering background noise and visual stimuli
- Challenges with working memory and task sequencing
- Impulsivity that interrupts sustained effort
- Hyperfocus on preferred activities alongside difficulty with routine tasks
- Sensory seeking or avoiding behaviours that impact attention

Common Myths About ADHD and Concentration

- **Myth:** Children with ADHD cannot focus at all. **Reality:** Many can hyperfocus intensely on preferred activities.
- **Myth:** They just need to try harder. **Reality:** ADHD is a neurodevelopmental difference, not a character flaw.
- **Myth:** Medication is the only solution. **Reality:** Environmental strategies, including music, are highly effective.

Key Takeaway: Movement and sensory input are not distractions for children with ADHD. They are often essential tools that help the brain regulate and access attention.



Why Music Helps the ADHD Brain Focus

Music is one of the most powerful tools available for supporting the ADHD brain. It engages multiple areas simultaneously, including those responsible for attention, memory, emotion, and motor coordination. This makes music uniquely suited to supporting children who experience attention difficulties.



Brain Activation

Music activates the prefrontal cortex, auditory cortex, and motor regions simultaneously, supporting integrated brain function and attention.



Rhythm and Predictability

Regular rhythmic patterns create a sense of safety and predictability, helping the brain anticipate and prepare, reducing cognitive load.



Dopamine and Motivation

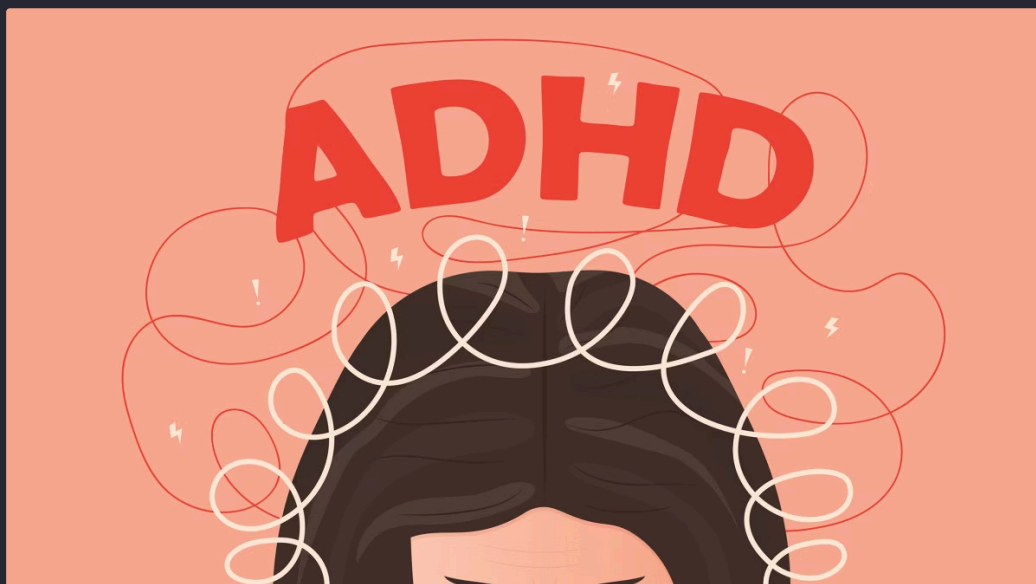
Enjoyable music triggers dopamine release, enhancing motivation and reward pathways that are often underactive in ADHD.



Auditory Processing

Structured musical input can help train the brain to process auditory information more efficiently, improving focus over time.

The Science Behind Music and Focus: Research in music therapy, including work by the British Association for Music Therapy, suggests that rhythmic auditory stimulation can improve attention and executive functioning in children with ADHD. Repetition and structure in music mirror the cognitive scaffolding these children need to sustain engagement.



Practical Music Strategies for Improving Concentration

The following strategies can be introduced at home or in educational settings. Start with one or two approaches and observe what resonates with your child. Consistency and personalisation are key.

- 1 Focus Playlists**
Create a dedicated playlist of calm, instrumental music for homework. Avoid lyrics during reading or writing tasks, as these compete for language processing resources.
- 2 Musical Timers**
Use short songs as natural timers for tasks. A three-minute song signals a three-minute work period, making time tangible and predictable.
- 3 Movement Breaks with Rhythm**
Incorporate rhythmic movement between tasks. Clapping patterns, drumming, or dancing for two to three minutes can reset attention and reduce restlessness.
- 4 Instrument-Based Attention Games**
Simple call-and-response drumming or echo games require sustained listening and impulse control, building attention skills through play.
- 5 Transition Songs**
Use consistent songs to signal transitions between activities. This reduces anxiety and supports smoother shifts in attention and behaviour.

✓ **Top Tips for Parents and Carers:** Observe your child's response to different types of music. Some children focus better with ambient sounds or nature recordings. Others prefer steady rhythmic music. There is no single right answer. Your child is the expert on their own brain.

Active Listening and Drumming for Attention

Active listening exercises and rhythmic drumming are among the most effective music therapy approaches for building sustained attention in children with ADHD. These activities require the child to listen carefully, respond in time, and maintain focus over a period of time.

Active Listening Exercises

- Ask your child to identify instruments in a piece of music
- Play a short piece and ask them to count how many times they hear a specific sound
- Use headphones with calming music during independent work
- Practice "freeze and listen" games with music that stops and starts

Drumming for Sustained Attention

- Establish a steady beat together and maintain it for increasing durations
- Use drumming patterns to mark the beginning and end of tasks
- Try mirroring games where you copy each other's rhythms
- Incorporate a drum into homework routines as a focus anchor

 **Music Therapy Insight:** In clinical music therapy sessions, drumming and rhythmic entrainment are used to support self-regulation and attention. The predictability of a steady beat helps the brain organise itself, reducing cognitive overwhelm and improving task engagement.



Building a Focus-Friendly Musical Environment

The environment in which a child learns and works plays a significant role in their ability to concentrate. By thoughtfully incorporating music and sensory considerations into your child's space, you can reduce barriers to focus and create conditions that support their unique brain.

Reducing Distractions

- Minimise visual clutter in the workspace
- Use noise-cancelling headphones or ear defenders when needed
- Position the workspace away from high-traffic areas
- Use a consistent, calm background soundscape

Choosing Appropriate Music

- Instrumental music is often less distracting than songs with lyrics
- Tempo should match the task: slower for reading, moderate for writing
- Ambient sounds, nature recordings, or binaural beats may work well
- Let your child have a say in what they listen to

Creating a Concentration Toolkit

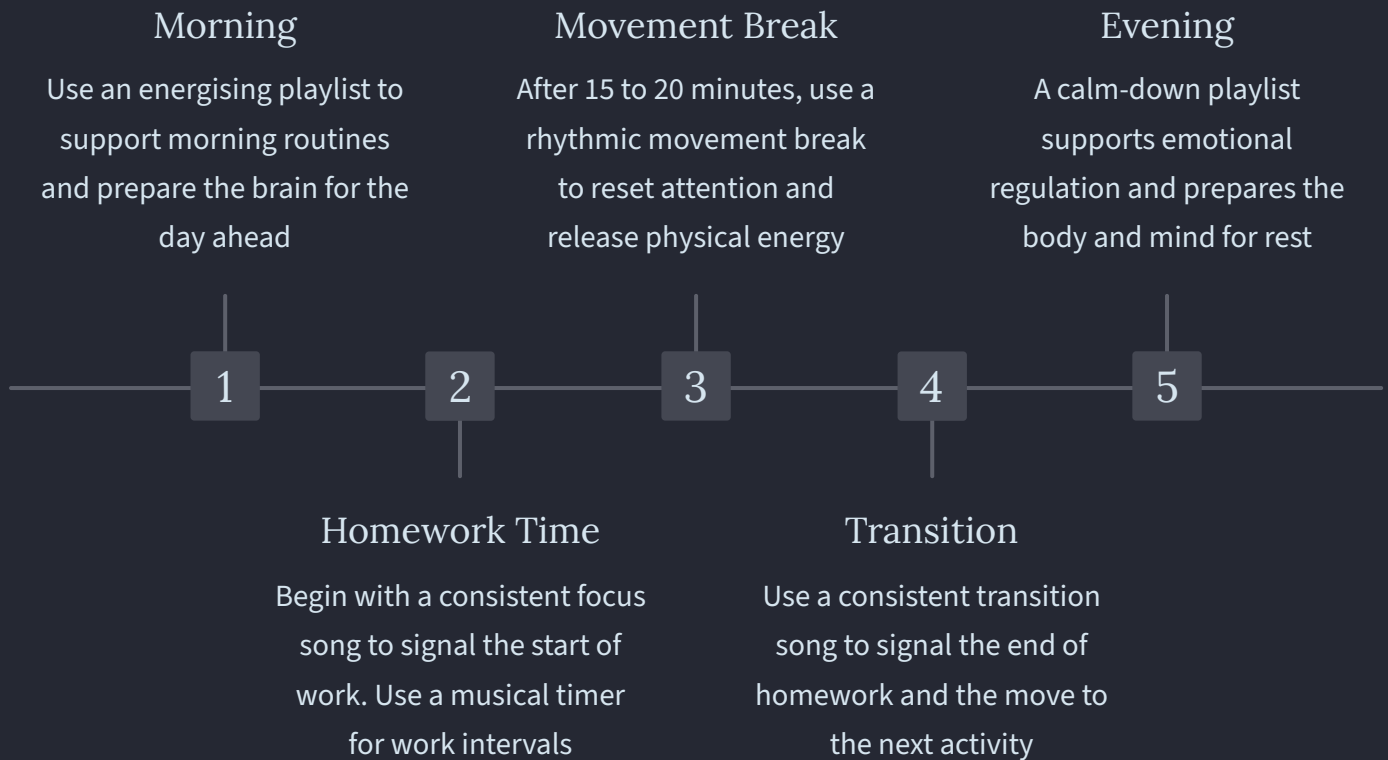
Work with your child to build a personalised toolkit that supports their focus:

- A dedicated focus playlist on a device or app
- Headphones or ear defenders
- A small drum or shaker for movement breaks
- A visual timer paired with a transition song
- A calm-down playlist for moments of overwhelm
- A list of songs that help them feel ready to work

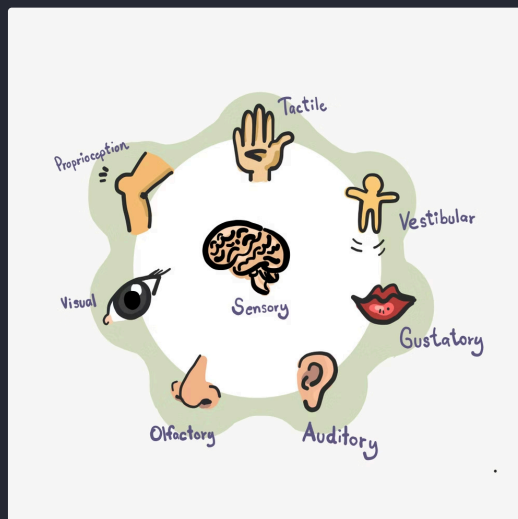
Reflection Activity: Sit with your child and ask: "What kind of music helps you feel calm and focused?" Create a shared playlist together. This collaborative approach builds ownership and increases the likelihood that your child will use the strategies independently.

Routines, Expectations, and Sensory Regulation

Consistency is one of the greatest gifts you can offer a child with ADHD. When music becomes embedded in daily routines, it provides a reliable structure that the brain can anticipate and rely upon. This reduces anxiety, supports transitions, and gradually builds the capacity for sustained attention.



Did You Know? Setting realistic expectations is essential. Focus is not an on/off switch. It develops gradually over time. Celebrate small wins, such as completing one task with music support, as meaningful progress.



Conclusion: Finding Focus Through Rhythm and Sound

Every child with ADHD is unique. There is no single approach that will work for every child, in every context, on every day. What this booklet offers is not a prescription, but an invitation: an invitation to explore, experiment, and discover what works for your child.

Music is not a magic solution, but it is a powerful and accessible tool. It meets children where they are, offering structure without rigidity, engagement without overwhelm, and joy alongside learning. Through therapeutic music-making, sensory experiences, and thoughtful use of sound, children with ADHD can develop strategies that honour their unique brains and build confidence over time.

Key Takeaways

- Focus is influenced by brain development, sensory processing, and environment
- Music engages multiple brain areas, supporting attention and regulation
- Rhythm, predictability, and dopamine are central to why music helps
- Practical strategies include playlists, timers, drumming, and transition songs
- A personalised concentration toolkit empowers children and families
- Consistency, patience, and celebration of progress are essential

A Message from Laura Seymour

"Every child carries within them a unique rhythm. Our role as parents, carers, and educators is not to change that rhythm, but to listen to it, honour it, and create the conditions in which it can flourish. Music gives us a language for doing exactly that. Celebrate your child's strengths. Embrace their individuality. And trust in the power of sound to support their journey towards focus, confidence, and joy."

"The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth."

African Proverb

For more resources, music therapy support, and sensory music tools, visit
www.serenitysensorymusic.co.uk

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