



Serenity
Sensory
Music

HARMONISING MINDS

*The Power of Therapeutic
Music for ADHD and Autism*



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INTRODUCTION TO



Harmonising Minds



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INTRODUCTION TO

Melodic Mindfulness

Children and adults with ADHD and/or autism often experience the world more intensely - sensory input, emotions, attention, and social interaction can feel overwhelming or unpredictable. Music, when used thoughtfully, can offer structure, regulation, expression, and connection in ways that are accessible and supportive.

In the UK, approaches promoted by the Autism Education Trust emphasise understanding individual differences, supporting sensory needs, predictability, and strengths-based support. Similarly, UK ADHD charities highlight the importance of movement, rhythm, motivation, and regulation in supporting attention and emotional wellbeing.

Music therapy practice in the UK (guided by the British Association for Music Therapy and HCPC standards) focuses on person-centred, responsive, and relational work - not “fixing” differences, but supporting individuals to thrive in ways that work for them.

This booklet shares music therapy-informed strategies that are appropriate for:

- Diagnosed ADHD and/or autism
- Individuals with many traits but no formal diagnosis
- Children, young people and adults

All strategies can be adapted and used flexibly at home, in education, or in support settings.



My sessions are tailored to meet the unique needs of each child or adult, ensuring a personalized and effective experience.

- Laura Seymour

CHAPTER I

Understanding ADHD and Autism Through a Sensory Lens

Both ADHD and autism involve differences in how the brain processes information, particularly sensory input, attention, and emotional regulation.

Many individuals experience:

- Sensory seeking or sensory avoidance
- Difficulty with transitions and unpredictability
- Challenges with attention regulation (hyperfocus or distractibility)
- Emotional intensity and rapid overwhelm

The AET framework encourages adults to adjust the environment rather than expect the individual to adapt. Music can be one of those environmental supports.

Why music works well**Music naturally offers:**

- Predictability (rhythm, repetition, structure)
- Sensory input that can be adjusted (tempo, volume, texture)
- Opportunities for movement (especially helpful for ADHD)
- Non-verbal communication (important for autistic individuals)

Music therapy practice often begins with regulation first, not social or learning demands. A calm nervous system makes everything else more accessible.

Key mindset shift:

Music is not a reward - it is a regulation tool.

CHAPTER II

Regulation Before Expectation

Both AET guidance and UK ADHD support frameworks emphasise that regulated bodies support regulated behaviour. Music can help regulate arousal levels - up or down - depending on need.

Strategies for ADHD

ADHD brains often benefit from:

- Movement
- Clear rhythm
- Short, engaging activities

Try this: Rhythm for focus

- Use a steady beat (clapping, tapping, marching)
- Keep it consistent for 30–60 seconds
- Add spoken instructions on the beat

This supports attention without overloading working memory.

Strategies for Autism

Autistic individuals often benefit from:

- Predictability
- Reduced sensory load
- Clear beginnings and endings

Try this: Start–Stop music cues

- Same short tune to begin
- Same closing sound to finish
- This reduces anxiety around transitions.

Co-regulation matters

Your calm presence combined with music helps regulate the other person.

Sit nearby, match their tempo, and avoid rushing.

Helpful phrase:

“We can find a rhythm together.”



CHAPTER III

Communication, Expression and Emotional Safety

Music therapy practice since 2020 places strong emphasis on emotional safety, choice, and agency. Music can be a bridge for expression when words are difficult or unavailable.

Emotional expression through sound

- Loud sounds = big feelings
- Slow sounds = tired or sad feelings
- Fast sounds = excitement or anxiety

Instead of correcting, acknowledge:

“I hear how strong that sound is.”

This validates emotion without judgement.

Supporting communication**Music supports:**

- Turn-taking
- Listening
- Shared attention
- Imitation

Try this: Copy-and-lead

1. Copy the individual's sound or rhythm
2. Pause
3. Add a small variation
4. Wait for a response

This mirrors communication patterns used in UK music therapy improvisation work.



CHAPTER III CONTINUED

Social interaction without pressure

AET guidance stresses that social engagement should never be forced. Music allows parallel participation, being together without demand.

Two people can:

- Play different instruments
- Move to the same beat
- Listen together

Connection doesn't have to look typical to be meaningful.



CHAPTER IV

Putting Music Strategies Into Daily Life

Consistency and flexibility are key. These strategies can be embedded into daily routines.

Morning regulation

Use the same upbeat but steady track each morning to support transitions and readiness.

Homework or focused tasks

Low-volume instrumental music with a steady tempo can help regulate attention (especially for ADHD).

Emotional reset moments

Have a “safe sound” ready:

- A familiar song
- A gentle hum
- A slow drum

Use it before escalation where possible.

Group or support settings

- Begin sessions with the same opening sound
- Use rhythm cues for transitions
- End with a calming closing sound

This aligns with AET’s emphasis on predictability and structure.

Respect sensory differences

Always allow:

- Volume control
- Headphones if needed
- Choice to opt out

Consent matters.



CONCLUSION

Harmonising Minds

Therapeutic music is not about changing who someone is - it's about supporting how they experience the world.

When used in line with UK Autism Education Trust principles, UK ADHD charity guidance, and British music therapy standards, music can:

- Support regulation
- Encourage communication
- Reduce anxiety
- Build confidence
- Create meaningful connection

For parents, carers and support workers, music offers a shared, flexible tool - one that meets individuals where they are, honours their differences, and supports emotional balance.

Small, consistent musical moments can have a powerful impact. Start gently, follow the individual's lead, and remember: connection comes before correction.

If you feel more specialised support would be beneficial, consider seeking an HCPC-registered music therapist for individualised assessment and intervention.

www.serenitysensorymusic.co.uk

