



Serenity  
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Music

# RHYTHMIC RELEASE

Leveraging Music to Channel Energy in ADHD Children

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# Rhythmic Release

## Leveraging Music to Channel Energy in ADHD Children

A practical guide for parents, carers, educators, and professionals. Discover how rhythm, movement, and music can help energetic children thrive, regulate, and build confidence.

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# What's Inside

This booklet explores how music and rhythm can support energetic children with ADHD. Each chapter offers practical strategies, evidence-informed insights, and activities you can use at home, in school, and in community settings.

|                                                    |                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 01                                                 | 02                                        |
| Introduction                                       | Chapter 1                                 |
| Understanding energy, ADHD, and the power of music | Understanding Energy and ADHD             |
| 03                                                 | 04                                        |
| Chapter 2                                          | Chapter 3                                 |
| Why Rhythm and Movement Matter                     | Musical Strategies for Channelling Energy |
| 05                                                 | 06                                        |
| Chapter 4                                          | Conclusion                                |
| Building Healthy Regulation Through Music          | Turning Energy Into Opportunity           |

**Did You Know?** Music therapy has been practised in the UK since the 1980s. The profession is now regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), ensuring high standards of therapeutic practice across the country.

# Introduction

Many children with ADHD experience high levels of physical and mental energy. This energy is not a problem. It is a resource that, when supported well, can become a source of creativity, enthusiasm, and confidence.

Children often need supportive ways to express, release, and regulate their energy. Music naturally combines movement, rhythm, creativity, and sensory input, making it an ideal tool for helping children channel their energy in positive and meaningful ways.

Music Therapy in the UK has grown significantly since the 2000s, with a strong evidence base supporting its use for children with ADHD. Therapeutic music-making supports regulation, engagement, confidence, and emotional wellbeing. It is not about performance or getting it right. It is about connection, expression, and finding a rhythm that works for each individual child.

"Every child carries their own rhythm. Our role is to listen, to follow, and to create space for that rhythm to flourish."



# Chapter 1: Understanding Energy and ADHD

ADHD is closely connected to activity levels. For many children, sitting still for long periods can feel genuinely uncomfortable or even impossible. This is not defiance or bad behaviour. It reflects differences in how the brain processes movement, sensation, and stimulation.

## Energy as Communication

Movement is often a child's way of communicating. A child who is fidgeting, pacing, or seeking sensory input may be telling us something important about how they feel or what they need.

- Physical energy and emotional energy are deeply connected
- Sensory processing differences affect how children respond to their environment
- Every child with ADHD is unique and has individual needs

## Seeing Energy as a Strength

Energetic children often carry remarkable qualities. These strengths deserve to be recognised and celebrated:

- **Enthusiasm** for new ideas and experiences
- **Creativity** and imaginative thinking
- **Curiosity** about the world around them
- **Determination** when something captures their interest
- **Spontaneity** and a joyful approach to life

Parents and carers may recognise these qualities in everyday moments: the child who builds elaborate worlds with toys, the child who dances without hesitation, or the child whose questions never seem to end.

✔ **Key Takeaway:** High energy is not something to be managed away. It is a strength that can be supported, channelled, and celebrated through the right approaches.

# Chapter 2: Why Rhythm and Movement Matter

Rhythm has a unique ability to organise the brain and body. When we move to a beat, our nervous system synchronises with the pulse. This is why repetitive beats and rhythmic activities can be so powerful for children who experience dysregulation or sensory overwhelm.



## Brain Organisation

Rhythmic input helps structure neural pathways, supporting attention, processing, and self-regulation over time.



## Drumming and Movement

Drumming activities provide a safe, structured outlet for physical energy while building focus and coordination.



## Dopamine and Motivation

Music stimulates dopamine release, which supports motivation, mood, and the drive to engage and participate.



## Sensory Regulation

Music engages multiple senses simultaneously, helping children who seek or avoid certain sensory experiences to find balance.

**📌 The Science of Rhythm and Regulation:** Research in music therapy and neuroscience shows that rhythmic auditory stimulation can improve motor coordination, emotional regulation, and attention in children with ADHD. UK-based studies from the 2000s onwards have demonstrated the therapeutic value of active music-making for children with neurodevelopmental differences.

**✅ Key Takeaway:** Rhythm is not just enjoyable. It is a neurological tool that can help children with ADHD feel more organised, regulated, and connected.

# Chapter 3: Musical Strategies for Channelling Energy

There are many ways to use music and movement to support energetic children. These activities can be adapted for different ages, abilities, and settings, including home, school, and community spaces.

1

## Drumming Games

Simple call-and-response drumming allows children to release energy while practising listening and turn-taking skills.

2

## Marching to Music

Marching or walking to a steady beat helps organise the body and can be used as a transition activity between tasks.

3

## Musical Obstacle Courses

Combine movement challenges with music stops and starts to create an engaging sensory-motor activity.

4

## Body Percussion

Clapping, stamping, and tapping create rhythm using the body itself, requiring no equipment and working anywhere.

5

## Dance and Movement

Free dance or structured movement activities allow children to express emotions physically in a safe and supported way.

6

## Energy Release Playlists

Curate a playlist of upbeat, rhythmic tracks for moments when a child needs a structured movement break.

# Top Tips for Parents and Carers

## At Home

- Create a dedicated movement space with soft surfaces and sensory equipment
- Use music to signal transitions: a specific song for tidy-up time, another for winding down
- Keep a set of rhythm instruments accessible for spontaneous play
- Build short movement breaks into homework or screen time routines

## In Schools and Community Settings

- Introduce rhythm copying games as a whole-class regulation activity
- Use active listening games to build focus before seated tasks
- Allow movement during learning: standing desks, wobble cushions, or quiet fidget tools
- Collaborate with music therapists or specialist support staff where available

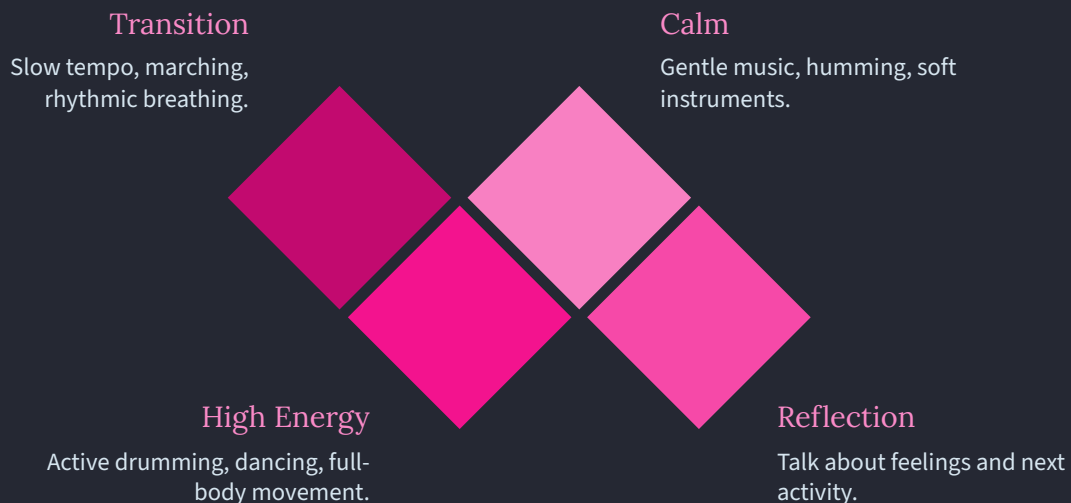
**⚠ When More Movement Is Needed:** If a child is showing signs of overwhelm, restlessness, or emotional dysregulation, this may signal a need for additional sensory and physical release. Offer a movement break, a drumming session, or a walk outside before returning to the task. Recognising these cues early can prevent escalation and support the child to re-engage more effectively.

**✅ Key Takeaway:** Small, consistent musical strategies used daily can make a significant difference to a child's ability to regulate, engage, and feel confident.



# Chapter 4: Building Healthy Regulation Through Music

Regulation is not about becoming calm all the time. It is about having the tools to move between different energy states in a way that feels manageable and safe. Music can support this process beautifully.



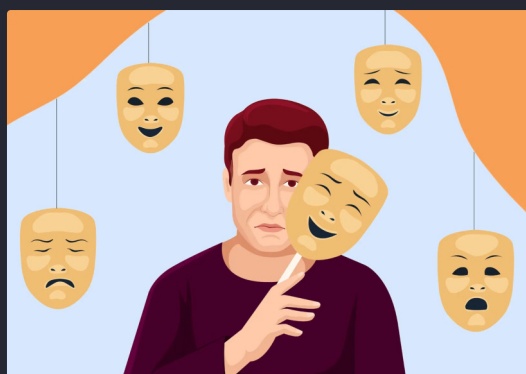
This cycle can be adapted for different times of day and different emotional states. The key is consistency and personalisation.

## Supporting Transitions

Use consistent musical cues to signal changes: a specific song for morning routines, another for after-school wind-down, and a calm playlist for bedtime. Predictability reduces anxiety and helps children prepare for what comes next.

## Recognising Emotional Cues

Notice how a child's relationship with music changes depending on their emotional state. A child who usually loves loud drumming but suddenly prefers quiet humming may be communicating that they need support. Follow their lead.



# Create Your Own Regulation Toolkit

Every child is different. Building a personalised toolkit of music and movement strategies means you can respond flexibly to different situations throughout the day.



## Morning

Upbeat playlist for getting ready, marching to the bus stop, or a quick drumming session to start the day with energy and purpose.



## After School

Active movement break: dance, outdoor play with music, or a rhythm game to release the energy built up during the school day.



## Homework Time

Instrumental background music, short timed movement breaks every 20 minutes, or body percussion to reset focus between tasks.



## Bedtime

Slow, predictable music, gentle humming together, or soft instrumental tracks to support the transition from activity to rest.

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



**Key Takeaway:** A personalised regulation toolkit empowers both the child and the adults around them to respond to energy and emotion with confidence and creativity.



# Conclusion: Turning Energy Into Opportunity

Energetic children do not need to have their energy removed. They need supportive opportunities to channel, express, and regulate it in ways that feel meaningful and empowering.

Throughout this booklet, we have explored how rhythm, movement, and music can transform moments of overwhelm into opportunities for learning, connection, creativity, and confidence. From understanding the neuroscience of rhythm to building personalised regulation toolkits, every strategy is rooted in one simple belief: every child deserves to thrive as they are.

## Celebrate Strengths

Enthusiasm, creativity, curiosity, and determination are gifts. Music helps these qualities shine.

## Embrace Individuality

Every child's rhythm is different. Follow their lead, adapt your approach, and trust the process.

## Build Connection

Shared musical experiences create bonds between children and the adults who support them.

"Embrace your child's individuality. Celebrate their movement. Discover the power of rhythm to support growth, regulation, and joy. Every child carries their own unique beat, and it is worth listening to."

*Laura Seymour, Serenity Sensory Music*

For more resources, workshops, and therapeutic music sessions, visit [www.serenitysensorymusic.co.uk](http://www.serenitysensorymusic.co.uk)

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