

Developmentally Appropriate Play is an important element of Early Childhood Music Therapy. Some aspects of play:

- Play is spontaneous, child-centred, and child-directed.
- Being playful means responding in the moment and focusing on the child and the child's needs. Being playful means not limiting experiences and respecting the child's boundaries.
- Play with instruments and props can be exploratory (mouthing or feeling texture), constructive (stacking), dramatic (making a instrument move like a snake), and relational or functional (playing drums with mallet to make music).

Supporting Young Children in Music Therapy Sessions

- Enjoy the music! Your participation is so important. Children so often love to interact with and follow the modeling of the most important adults in their life.
- Join the circle where children can see you and model for the children.
- Allow children to observe and join when they are ready. Children may sit and watch quietly for some or all parts of the music therapy time, especially in the early sessions.
- Reassure and acknowledge participation of children with smiles, eye contact and enthusiasm while limiting verbal cues.
- Please limit verbal interactions with other adults during the group.
- Please share the participant's treatment team goals, strategies and progress with the music therapist before or after sessions.
- If you are unsure, consult with the music therapist.

More on Prompts

- When possible sit in the circle where children can see you with out having to turn around. It is also fine if a child does best sitting in the lap.
- Limit verbal prompts as this can take a child's attention from the musical/nonverbal prompts.
- Start with less intrusive prompts (gestures and modeling) and move to tactile and hand-over-hand supports if the child requires physical supports to perform task or to understand what is being requested.
- Allow the child time to perform a task before moving to hand-over-hand prompts. Try waiting 5 to 10 seconds to give them the freedom to try. The music therapist may often leave long pauses in the music or extend the song structure to allow for this.
- Observe and wait before hand-over-hand support if the child appears to be choosing not to participate or needing time to process the activity.

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