This is a challenging time for many right now as businesses and schools are closing to prevent the spread of COVID-19 virus. There are millions of children that are having to stay home and one of the biggest concerns for parents is …

***“WHAT DO I DO WITH MY CHILDREN ALL DAY?”.***

As a music therapist in the field for the past 20 years I have spent a lot of time helping families create and implement at home music programs from educational to a multitude of other therapeutic goals. As fear and worry surrounds us during this shutdown it is of utmost importance to also focus on optimum mental health. Music therapy has been known to increase positive benefits over the years in multiple research studies that help reduce anxiety, depression, fear and worry. What a more important time than right now to use music more than ever.

Here is a list of some of the musical activities that I suggest you share and implement with your family during this time. I highly suggest you to make it fun, make it educational and make it meaningful and memorable! These are times that children will remember most that during stress and chaos “my family came together through music and play”.

Enjoy sharing music with your family during this time!

1.  **MUSIC IMPROVISATION OR FAMILY JAM SESSION**

Most music therapists use music improvisation (or jamming) as a way of connection, communication and helping clients redirect their energy and focus. You do NOT need to be a musician to improvise music. You can utilize instruments that you may already have at home or make it fun and creative and find objects around your home to use as instruments. For example: Pots and pans, buckets, keys, plastic containers, and much more can be fun improvisation instruments. You can also make a fun scavenger hunt for your family to see how many items they can find at home to turn into an instrument. Enjoy the creativity, sounds and rhythms you can make together as a family. Solos are also fun as well!

**2. SONG PLAY LISTS**

Music therapists often help clients collect songs to create various playlist to match their emotions or create memories of monumental moments. You can take some time where you and your family chooses an emotion and search for songs that they can place in each play list. Children can even do this on their own if you give them directions and access to YouTube to find songs that fit each category. Some category examples are:

* Music to motivate me
* Music to help me relax
* Music that makes me happy
* Music from my favorite movie
* Music family favorites

**3. MUSIC DANCE PARTY**

Music and movement is central to our bodies and can help us regulate our emotions and allow us to release tension. When music is played our whole bodies receive the therapeutic benefits of its vibration and sound. Music moves us to move and dance so why not create a list of your families favorite dance songs and move together and have fun.

**4. KARAOKE**

Singing has been known to decrease anxiety and depression as well as a powerful tool in expressing our feelings. Find some family favorites and sing along together. Youtube has a lot of karaoke sing along versions of songs that could be fun for you and your family.

**5. SONG REWRITING**

Music therapists utilize song rewriting activities in many sessions to help clients connect to their feelings or to express themselves. Song rewriting can be made easier by taking out various words from a familiar song for your family to fill in the blanks and to make the song their own.

For example: You are my sunshine can be rewritten as:

You are my \_\_\_?\_\_\_, you make me \_\_\_?\_\_\_, when skies are \_\_\_?\_\_\_…

**6. MUSIC TO RELAX AND PRACTICE MINDFULNESS**

Music can have a therapeutic impact on helping us relax, practice mindfulness, focus on positivity and allow us to let go of negative/fearful thoughts. This can be a useful tool right now to help children (and parents) to practice relaxation, medication and practice focusing on gratitude and positivity in a time of uncertainty and worry.

You can take time to go through all your families favorite songs that help them to feel calm. I prefer to use music that has no lyrics to help focus on images or thoughts that come to mind when you sit, listen and focus on mindfulness.

**7. MUSIC AND ART**

Music and art is a powerful combination to help express, focus and share our thoughts and/or feelings. Music and art is also a therapeutic combination to help with expression, mindfulness and exploring creativity. You can have your children create art (such as painting, drawing or collaging) to match the music or their feelings.

**8. MUSIC TRIVIA**

This will take a little bit of research and time but can be a fun activity to learn more about music, lyrics and artists. For example:

* How many songs can you list that has the word HAPPY in it?
* Name 3 songs by Beyonce
* Who sang Let it go?

**9. EDUCATIONAL LEARNING THROUGH MUSIC**

Right now with school out and children at home what better way to utilize music? Many music therapist utilize music to help children learn new educational material that they may have struggles with at school. Turn math, reading and social stories to a whole new level by creating a simple melody to make learning fun and easier to learn. How did most of us learn the alphabet? We sang it!! Make learning fun through music.  For example:

* Create math song melodies to learn addition, subtraction, division, multiplication and more.
* Use rhythm and melody to help with spelling

I hope you find these musical interventions helpful for you and your family during this time of being homebound and trying to fill the time. Also, please share any of your ideas or musical videos of you and your family creating music together as I’d love to see what you create together.

I welcome any additions to this list and love to share musical resources to help all families during this time. Please share in the comments below.

For more information please reach out to us:

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