

## **Music and dance therapy methods for improving the children-parents relationships**

Codruţa PASC<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *The relationship between children and parents affects all the future experiences of any human being. That is why we should pay more attention to it. Everybody- specialists, children, parents, admit the fact and want to do all the best they can to improve it. More and more studies and experiments prove the efficiency of music and dance therapy in many areas of our lives, including social and relation communications. The purpose of my experiment was to demonstrate the utility of that kind of therapies in developing good relations between children and parents, using simple methods and exercises by specialists in the domain and recording in a scientifically way much of the results obtained. The experiment revealed our hypothesis, namely the one which sustained the efficiency of musical and dancing therapies in this area of relationships, natural, simple way of rebalancing our emotions, feelings, bodies and relations.*

**Key-words:** *Music therapy, dance therapy, children, parents, communication, social skills, empathy, emotions.*

### **1. Therapy with music, move and dance**

Therapy with music, move and dance is one of the most efficient way to reestablish our well-being, calm and balance, used more and more in our days in all kinds of disorders or health problems (Vancea 2016, 23).

Psychology, medicine, different sciences dealing with health and human being harmony, stress more and more in the latest decades on finding different natural methods of obtaining human balance. The people have been using music and moving intuitively since ancient times to find peace, silence, calm and health (Nichifor, and Bocirnea, 1965).

The body experience has been a powerful tendency recently, finding significant results in this respect. The most important aspect is the working directly and correctly with our body, not only with our mind and imagination.

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<sup>1</sup> SC TAPY SRL, pasccodruta@yahoo.com

Using the dance and melotherapy techniques and the moving, one can arrive at self-control, accessing personal blockings and body tensions and, at the same time, reaching their correspondence in the mind activity (Vancea, 2016).

## **2. Working on children-parents relationships**

The relationship between children and their parents is one of the most important and powerful of the entire life. Everybody admits the importance of this relation for our entire life, because it affects us all the time, all aspects of our children and adult life and all of our future relations and contacts.

More and more adults, not only specialists in medicine and psychical science, but parents of all kind of ages and professional backgrounds recognize the importance of communication with their children and try to find out new ways of improving this. Therapy with music and dance is one of the most powerful, natural and healing way to obtain best results in improving relationships between children and their parents. It affects both partners, children on the one hand and parents on the other one, but, at the same time, it works on the relation itself (Levitin, 2006). Through these therapies, children and parents realize their feelings, emotions and difficulties in the present time and they work with their bodies, becoming aware of their known and unknown reality. As we told you before, therapy with music, moving and dance are very important because they access all the aspects of our internal beings, not only our mental or imagination.

*Music Therapy is the use of music* to accomplish goals, in which a professional uses it to rebalance physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals. Through this kind of therapy, clients' abilities are strengthened and transferred to other areas of their lives. Therapy with music includes creating, singing, moving and listening to music. Music therapy also provides avenues for communication that can be helpful to those who find it difficult to express themselves in words (Iamandescu 2014, 40).

At the same time, therapy with music and moving improves our abilities to express ourselves in different ways, not using words, being at first difficult for us, but with extraordinary results when we continued to use it (Buhaiciuc, 2013). Especially in the relationship between children and their parents, it is a very amazing and interesting way of communication, teaching both of them to become more aware of their presence and to remain focused on their presence and their relation. *Therapy with music, moving and dance provides emotional support for children and parents, offering a magnificent way for expression their feelings.*

*In our country*, the melotherapy and therapy by moving and dance are at their beginnings and there is no much experience in the domain, although more and more therapists and instructors use them, obtaining remarkable feedbacks and results.

What is more important, all these results can be observed, measured, counted and proved scientifically.

### 3. An interesting experiment...

My experiment involved *twenty* child-mother couples, being a way of proving the efficiency of these kinds of therapies. I used especially active music therapy, some specific exercises and games with music, separately for children, for their parents, and then for both of them in the same time. I used some moving and dance methods as well, which blocked all the participants' bodies, having remarkable proven effects on them, and on their relations and communications too.

Some of the active therapies I used were the therapy by group-singing or musical improvisation, as well as orchestra playing, some specific games and exercises, which I will describe. The healing by musical auditions after a psychological investigation lead by a specialist proved its efficiency in a considerable number of cases and I used it in my experiment, with best results.

The hypothesis of the experiment was that all the musical and dance methods used in it should improve the ability to listen and communicate the problems, the feelings and the emotions between children and their parents, music and dance being natural healings way that could be use anyone anytime with best results.

#### 3.1. Musical exercises

I used an exercise in which *children and parents had to express anger, demand, and then asking for support using music*, more specific, using different intonations with music of words "Please!", "Yes" or "No", "You should" (do this) or "You shouldn't", "You have to do", "You are allowed to do" or "You are not allowed to do". In 19 cases from 20, the participants became more aware of the impact of their words and their tone, intonation and using music to express their demands and their feelings helping them, at the very beginnings, to understand better the partners of the relation and their emotions. The communications were more animated and richer in that way and all the participants declared they liked this kind of communicating and they should use it more often in their real lives.

Another kind of exercise was that in which *children had to communicate with their parents only with instruments, expressing their emotions and feelings*, first like two partners and then all the participants, creating an orchestra and a music of the group. It was very interesting to observe the difficulties of the participants not to talk. Some of them were at first confused, because they found themselves in a difficult situation, not knowing how to do this. But, with a little patience and willing to do this kind of exercise, they did it and, 18 of 20 of the little groups declared it was a really interesting activity. They found new ways to communicate, realizing

that sometimes it was a more powerful way of expressing themselves. They declared in that way they became more intuitive and open- hearted at the others' feelings and needs, they accessed a richer reality and they really liked it.

When they had to do this kind of communication with the entire group, it was easier, because they had the preparation for how to do and they knew to listen and to communicate without using words. Some of them realized the importance of silence for the first time (4 of the groups declared that) and 2 groups of 20 found it was more difficult to communicate in group than when they were alone. The 2 groups were the groups with best results when they worked alone and they admitted they felt more comfortable when they were alone than with others. It is easy to understand this, because sometimes, when we feel very secure in our families, we do not have the need to communicate with others so often. Anyway, it is important for this kind of relationships between children and parents to be more open hearted with others too, because in that way, they will be more communicative with the others' needs and, at the same time, they will reach more experiences which will develop all kind of relations of the family.

I used *Bossinger Therapy* too, a powerful musical therapy, another one, used in this project. It was an active one, in which I used the association of music with therapist stories, drawings and models, social paintings. Such a method has proved to be a good way of recovering and rebalancing our mind and body. The two partners of each group had to listen to some musical pieces, which transmitted some feelings and emotions, and to make a mandala or other social paintings, expressing the feelings they had been listening to those pieces.

### **3.2. The therapy by dance and moving**

The second therapy I used in this experiment was the therapy by dance and moving, a way of emotional and behavior expressing, balancing and remodeling (Krauss, 2014). This kind of intervention, accompanied by different ways of meditation and consciousness, represents a unique innovator therapeutically step forward, addressing both to body, mind and emotions. The forms of dance and moving therapy used in this experiment were expressing different emotions, feelings, using moves, expressing for example fear, aggression, love, expressing how each of the partners lived some demands of the others or how they felt even the relations between themselves. All the participants had the freedom to express by dance and moving the feelings they wanted to express and we obtained interesting results, too, because some of them accessed emotions and feelings they didn't do before. This was very rebalancing for them, because using no words they had more freedom and new possibilities to release some tensions or to express some new emotions. At the same time, like in the therapy with music, they found a very interesting way to work with their bodies, realizing a strong connection between emotions and some tensions

they had in their bodies. Releasing in a responsible way some tensions, expressing some emotions, were useful for most of them (18 groups from 20 declare that).

Another technique I used was the one in which, having some musical pieces accompanying, each of the partners *had to modellate the moves of the others, expressing how they thought their partners felt*. The purpose of this exercise was to find how well children and parents knew each other and their kind of reactions. It was an interesting moment, 2 of 20 groups saying it was difficult for them to do that, because they didn't know how their partners felt. From the other 15, 3 expressed only 3 of the 5 emotions suggested by the music, but 14 of the 15 expressed the feelings how their partners wanted to. The next exercise *was that each group should dance some plays, using no words, communicating as well as possible to each other*, realizing the others' needs, tensions and emotions, keeping all the time a strong connection between them.

It was a good moment for each group, too, because this kind of exercise really reconnected the partners, making them more careful to others' needs, expressing themselves and, at the same time, feelings the partners. 19 of 20 of the groups declared it was a positive experience for them and they wanted to repeat this kind of experience. After that, the groups were extended to 4 partners instead of 2 and then to a single group with all the participants dancing together, using no words and enjoying the moments with their partners. We noticed the same thing like in the therapy with music. The couples who worked best in 2 in family, worked and communicated less with the others, because they didn't feel so strong the need to be with the others. So, they will have to work with this aspect, for the reasons I presented above.

Other therapies by moving and dance used in this project were: *the Gabrielle Roth therapy of the five Rhythms*, a technique which catalyze motion deeply in the psyche, *the Ying/Yang energy balancing (equilibrium) leg dance*, *the energizing by music, dance, image and colors* and *the uniting therapy by dance and music*. The last one is an especially powerful therapy initiated and developed by the Romanian Experimental Psychotherapy School, having a special effect in starting of creating and healing energies.

*The Gabrielle Roth therapy* was a very profound one, with one of the most powerful effects of each participant and of the groups, as well (17 of 20 groups declared an improvement of their states and of their relations too). Each rhythm of this technique is a practical tool of awakening that will release every participant to dance on the edge, to be outrageous, to transform suffering into art and art into awareness. FLOWING, the first rhythm, holds the feminine mysteries, the second one, STACCATO, explores the masculine energy. In CHAOS, the third one, one of the most releasing rhythm, participants were challenged to liberate all the tensions from their bodies and to integrate the first two kind of energies. LYRICAL is the rhythm of trance and self-realization and STILLNESS, the mother of all rhythms.

### 3.3. Scientifically tests

A very important aspect of my experiment is the one referring to the scientific methods I used to test all this melotherapy and dance therapy methods efficiency.

I used psychological tests for that, like anxiety and stress testing, STAY I and II, tests for communicational and social ability, the individual and family drawing test, observation of the behavior changes, the instructors feedback and, with best results, the body homeostasis. We followed the changes registered at the body homeostasis level, blood pressure, pulse, all of them proving the efficiency of the methods used in relaxing and improving communication, understanding and improving the relations between children and their parents.

Of course, this experiment is only a point where we can start deeper searches in the future, using representative samples, the purpose of it being a point of sustaining the possibilities music and dance therapy gives to recover and repair in a natural, simple and agreeable way the relationships between children and their parents.

### 3.4. Study cases

For this paper, I choose two cases, a couple of a 12 years old girl and her mother, 42 years old, which wanted to improve their relations, not having specific problems, and one of a group of 7 years old boy and his 35 years old mother, which had some problems of adapting in society. The boy wanted to spend time only with his mother, he became really furious and scared when he had to go somewhere, and his mother wanted to find a solution for this problem.

I will present both couples in parallel, insisting on the main differences and effects of the exercises on them.

It was very interesting that both of them didn't have difficulties to work together, they had best results with both therapies, but had problems when they had to communicate and relate with the others. It was very difficult especially for the couple with the little boy to be in larger groups, considering it a disturbance, a negative, even a hostile experience for him and his mother. They had problems especially at the dance exercises, when they had to dance with all the participants, when the boy didn't want to dance with anybody else than his mother. Later on, in discussions, he declared that the world, for him, was something annoying and unpleasant and he preferred to stay only with his family at home, a secure and quiet place, where he could found silence, peace and calm.

Of course that was not a normal situation and, being encouraged by the therapist, both, the boy and his mother, were more and more implicated in the group dance, the next step being for them to apply this kind of attitude in the real life. At first, they were encouraged to dance on the music they really liked, because it was easier to implicate them to do something pleasant, but, little by little, they would

need to be encouraged to do the same thing with rhythm they considered not so friendly, like in the real life. They were encouraged to see the world like a dance on music, where rhythms changed all the time, but to try to see the beauty in it and in the partners they danced with, not only in parents or very closed family persons. They promised to do that kind of exercises in other occasions, when they should have the opportunities, and they should be more relaxed and involved in relations with the others. At the same time, they declared that experience as a pleasant one, which they would want to repeat, and that was a good point for our experiment.

The other couple had some difficulties in this exercise, too, but they adapted at it easier and, at the end, they danced as relaxed and happy as they did in two.

Another kind of exercise was the one in which the two partners of each group had to make a mandala, while listening to specific music, expressing their feelings, their specific emotions lived in those moments and especially their hopes regarding their life and their relations. The mandala made by the 12 years old girl and her mother, as in the picture below, is rich in bright colors, opened shapes and it denotes a calm and happy state of mind and soul. The two of them made that mandala in a happy mood, declaring they liked it and they were doing such activities at home, too, or with other occasions. It was an opportunity for both of them to communicate to each other and to the rest of the participants using no words, too, only music, sounds and pictures. They discovered an activity that really made them relaxed and happy and a way of creating and developing their personality.



Fig.1-3. Mandala and pictures made by the 12 years old girl and her mother

We obtained some remarkable effects and noticed both of the families at the 5<sup>th</sup> Rhythms Gabrielle Roth dancing. We noticed a more relaxed attitude after that exercise. All the rhythms were very profound for the two couples, as they declared and we could notice.

Consequently, both couples obtained higher scores at Stress Scale, after this exercise, which is a proof of its efficiency.

We used musical pieces all the time, encouraging them to an open, peaceful and calm atmosphere, which was very refreshing for the participants and for the two couples.

Both of them, like all the participant groups, received as homework to listen to the music they would feel they need to be more relaxed. Specialists suggested them some pieces, but they were encouraged to find the music they like. More than that, they were encouraged to express their feelings and emotions using music and movements, to keep an open relation, a positive attitude and to work specifically on the personal problems we and they discovered.

Both of the two couples received higher scores on communication and reducing stress, they became open - minded, relaxed and more involved in the activities of the larger group, abilities which they should perform and manifest in the real life.

#### 4. Limits and conclusions

**The limits of the experiment** are very clear; the period was too short, we didn't use representative samples, the specialists had their limits, but the remarkable effects are very encouraging, sustaining the benefits of music and dancing therapy, which can be the start of future researches and experiments in this direction.

Music and movements are very natural useful methods to rebalance ourselves and our relations and, as this project work proved, to improve the relationship, the capacity of listening and speaking of children and parents, to resolve possible problems in their communication.

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