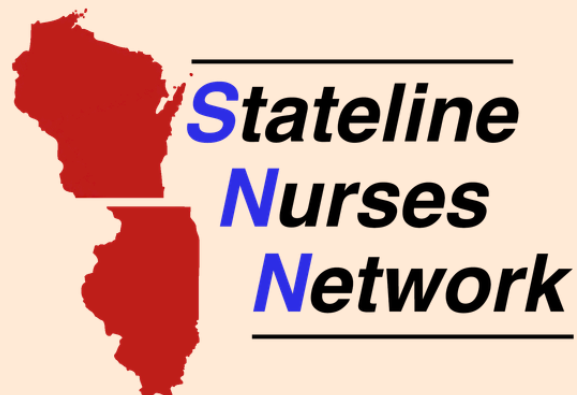




The Song of Care:

Listening, Healing, and Being Human Together

Kearsti-Rae Knowles, MMT, LPMT, MT-BC



Today's objectives

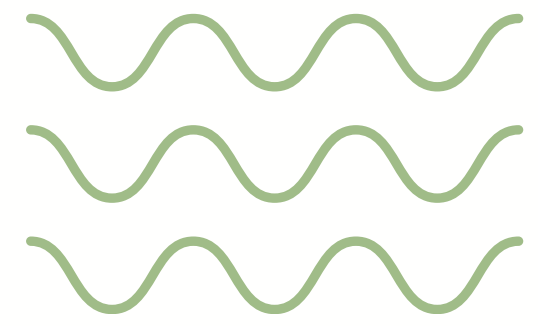
Define music therapy and describe the qualifications and clinical scope of board-certified music therapists

Differentiate music therapy from other uses of music in healthcare settings

Identify key principles of music therapy that align with nursing values

Experience and reflect on the physiological and emotional effects of music-based interventions

Apply insights to enhance your own caregiving practice



Arrive and Center

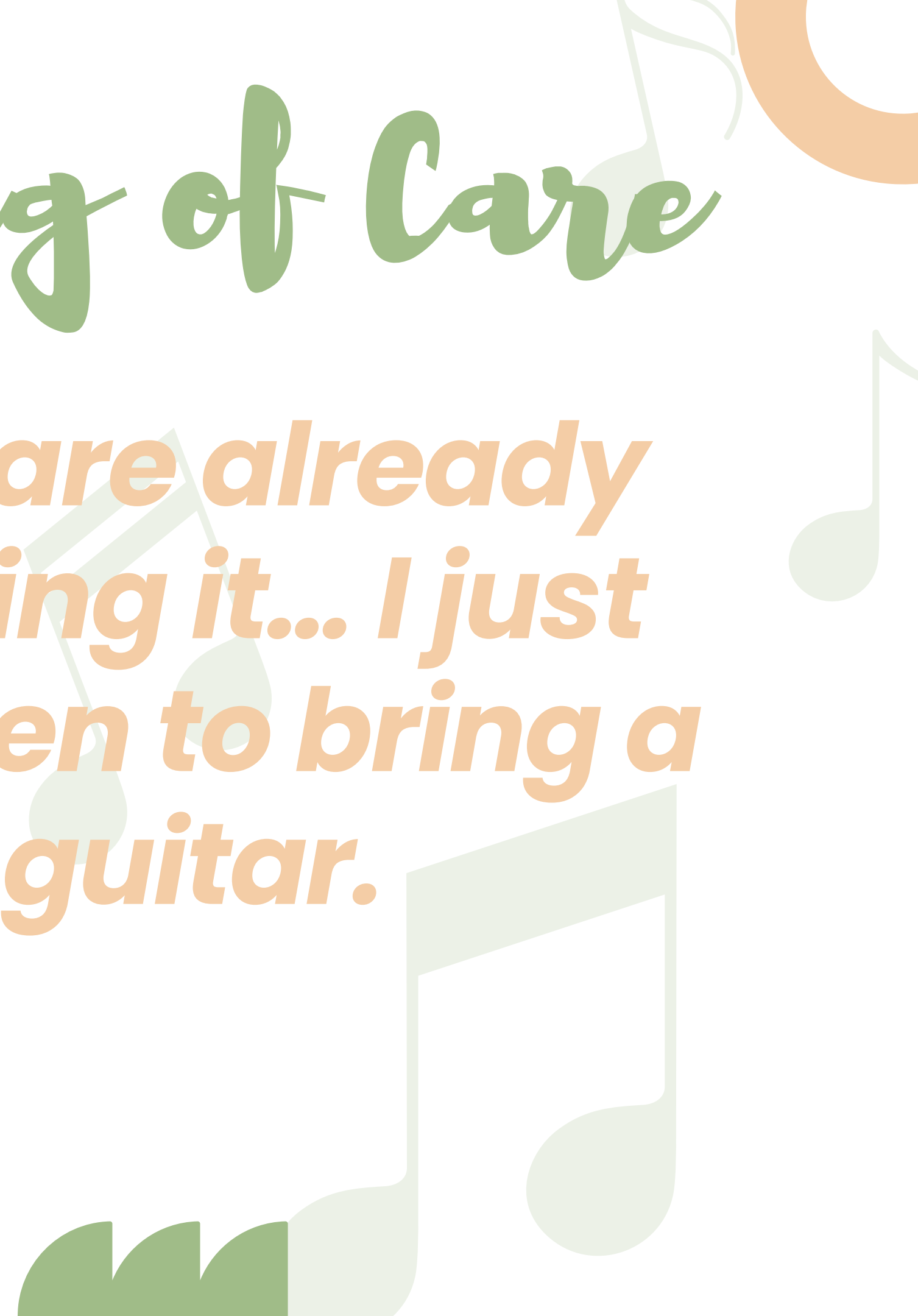


A Song of Care



A Song of Care

*You are already
singing it... I just
happen to bring a
guitar.*



About Me

- Bachelors Degree in Music Therapy from Illinois State University
- Masters Degree in Music Therapy from Alverno College
- Owner and internship director at Safe in Sound Music Therapy, LLC
- Extensive background and training in neurological disorders and music's impact
- Trauma-informed and neuroaffirming approach
- Experience with Autism, Hospice, SLD, ID/DD, Memory Care, Geriatrics, ED/BD, ADHD, Mental Health, Epilepsy, Fragile X, FAS, Rett syndrome, CAPD, CAS, DHH/Cochlear Implants, Blindness, Hunter Syndrome, Down Syndrome, ODD, Cerebral Palsy, Chromosomal/Genetic Conditions, Early Childhood, and Gifted Children.



SAFE
in
SOUND

MUSIC THERAPY, LLC

K-Rae Knowles
MMT, LPMT, MT-BC

What is Music Therapy?

The clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program.

(AMTA, 2026)



We use music as our tool to achieve non-musical, functional goals.



USA: 9,073

Illinois: 317

Who are music therapists?

- 4 years at an AMTA- & CBMT-approved university
- Extensive education in music courses + human development, special education, anatomy & physiology, psychology, sociology, neurology, counseling techniques, research and statistics, and more.
- >1,200 clinical hours by the end of internship
- Pass CBMT's board certification exam (MT-BC)
- Certified to work birth to death with rigorous standards, scope, and ethics expectations
- Maintain certification with continuing education (including specializations)
- In Illinois, MTs must also obtain and maintain their LPMT licensure to practice; Wisconsin has the WMTR credential

What might it look like?



Music Therapy in Illinois
The Illinois Association for Music Therapy

Support for children
and families during
hospital stays



Watch on  YouTube

Methods of Music Therapy in practice

Receptive:

The therapist plays music for the client to listen/experience and respond to (whether verbally or non-verbally).

Improvisational:

Spontaneous song creation- no rules!

Re-creative:

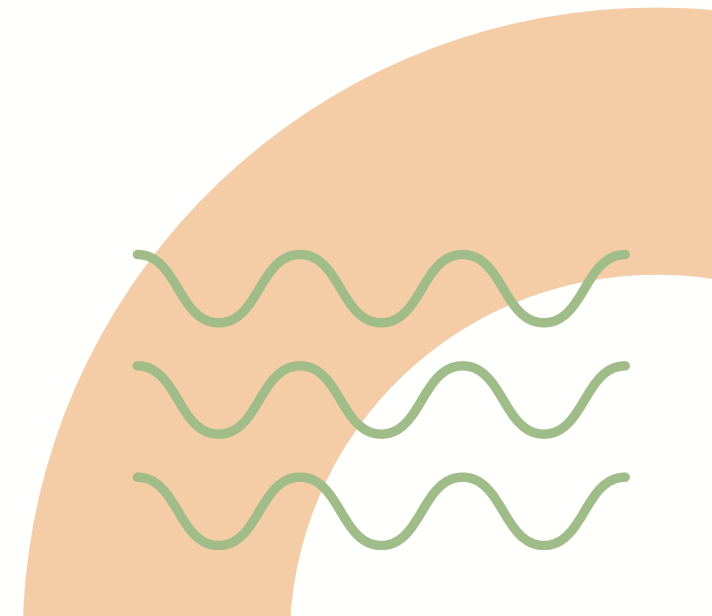
An active, therapist-guided method where clients perform, sing, or play pre-existing music.

Compositional:

The client works with the therapist to compose their own music.



Anatomy of a song



Verses(s): Working with families over time

- **Early Intervention/Disabilities**
- **Senior Care**
- **Oncology**

Early Intervention/Disabilities ✨

- **WHERE:** Schools (therapeutic or regular), group homes, community settings, in-home
- **WHO:** Various disabilities (intellectual, developmental, physical), Early Intervention (up to 3yo), early childhood (3-5yo). Often co-treat with LBSI, OT, SW, PT, SLP, BCBA
- **WHAT:** Attention, academics, social skills, motor skills, emotion regulation, speech/language, developmental milestones, self-care, community building, self-confidence, quality of life



Pick a dance move. Groove with me-
but be ready to freeze!

Working on:

Attention (sustained, selective, alternating)

Gross/Fine motor

Auditory perception

Direction following

Impulse control

Confidence

Cognitive Motor Processing

Bilateral coordination

Collaboration

Self-expression

Awareness of others



Senior Care

- **WHERE:** Skilled and assisted nursing facilities, retirement communities, hospitals, in-home
- **WHO:** Well elderly, Alzheimer's/Dementia care- and their families.
Collaborative care with nurses, CNAs, activity/recreation therapists, SW, OT, PT.
- **WHAT:** Socialization (isolation/withdrawal), anxiety/depression, leisure/hobby outlet, self-expression, physical wellness, community building, short- and long-term memory, family bonding, intergenerational connection, quality of life, aphasia/apraxia/dysarthria

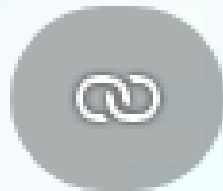




Alzheimer patients turn to music therapy to help focus mind

USA TODAY

TAMPA, FL / WTSP

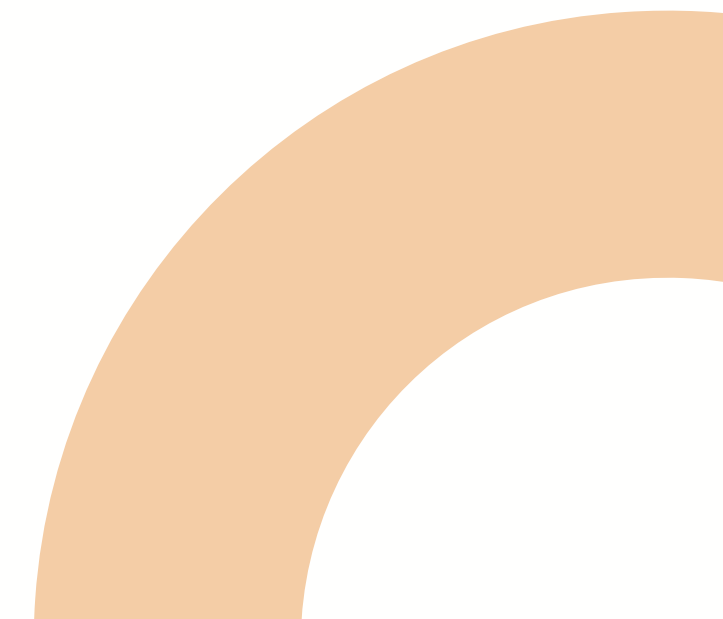


Watch on  **USA
YouTube**

Oncology

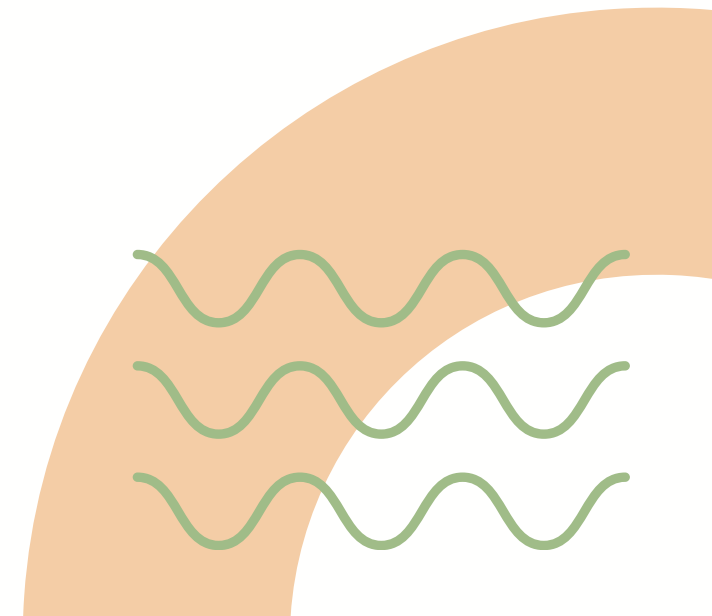


- **WHERE:** Inpatient, outpatient/treatment centers, groups
- **WHO:** Cancer patients and their families. Collaborative care with doctors, nurses, CNAs, child life specialists, and other therapists.
- **WHAT:** Meaning-making, mood vectoring, self-expressive outlet, autonomy, pain management, confidence, coping, rehabilitation, family support, decrease anxiety/increase comfort in a medical environment



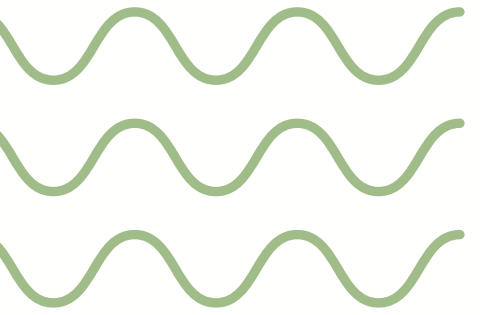


Anatomy of a song



Chorus: Regulating Bodies & Brains

- **Pediatrics**
- **Emotional/Behavioral Disorders**
- **Mental Health/Trauma**



Pediatrics

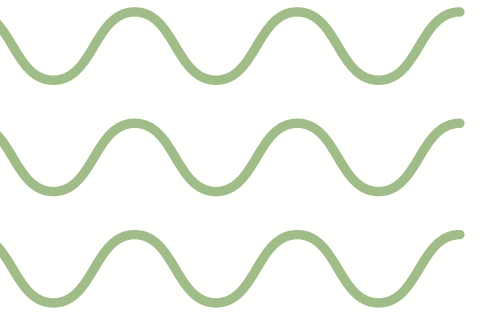


- **WHERE:** Hospitals (inpatient, outpatient)
- **WHO:** PICU, Med/Surg, Burn Units, Gen Peds/Acute Care, Hematology, Transplants, Nephrology, Rehabilitation, etc.- and their families. Collaborative care with nurses, CNAs, doctors, OT, PT, SLP, RT, SW.
- **WHAT:** Anxiety, depression, procedural support, weaning from ventilation or paralytic/sedative medication, self-expression, isolation, comfort with medical environment, sensory stimulation, pain management, respiratory support, coping skills, autonomy, rehabilitation (physical goals), quality of life









Emotional/Behavioral Disorders



- **WHERE:** Schools (therapeutic or regular), in-home, residential facilities, inpatient units, outpatient/groups
- **WHO:** ADHD, ODD, Depressive Disorders, Anxiety Disorders, Selective Mutism, PTSD, OCD, Conduct Disorder, IED, Bipolar, Schizophrenia, Attachment Disorders, BPD. Often co-treat with LBSI, SW, BCBA
- **WHAT:** Verbal and non-verbal self-expression, low-pressure/demand collaboration, executive functioning, decreasing self-harm, relaxation, coping skills, empowerment, processing/meaning-making, externalization, social skills, decrease need for medication, cognitive flexibility




*Intermittent Explosive
Disorder- regulation
through drumming*





Mental Health / Trauma ✨

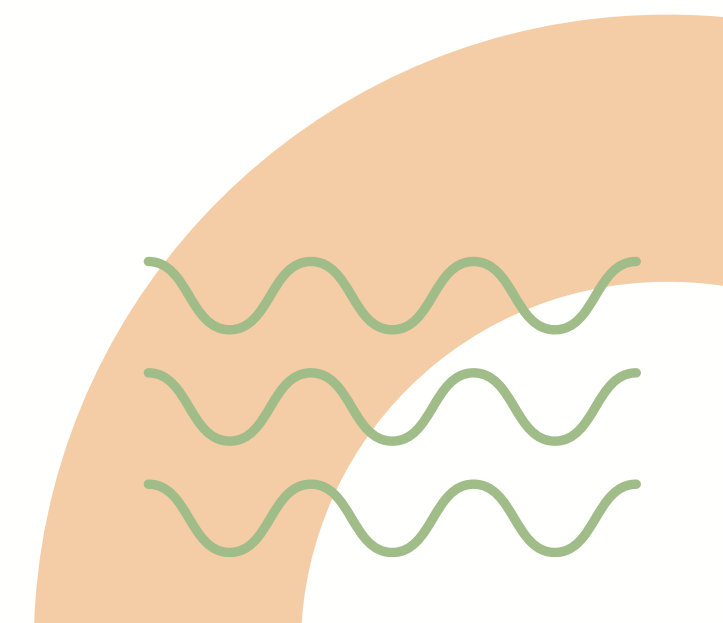
- **WHERE:** Schools , inpatient units, outpatient/office/clinic, virtual, in-home
 - **WHO:** Eating Disorders, PTSD (including military, first responders), Anxiety/Depression, Addiction, Schizoaffective Disorders, Suicidal Ideation and their families. Often collaborate with LCW/LCSW.
 - **WHAT:** Emotion regulation, verbal and non-verbal self-expression/outlet, low-pressure/demand collaboration, decreasing self-harm, relaxation, coping skills, empowerment, processing/meaning-making, externalization, mood vectoring, resilience, reframing, coping skills, forming connections/bonds, autonomy, decrease need for medication, cognitive flexibility, self-confidence
- 

Music Therapy for Veterans' Mental Health





Anatomy of a song




Bridge: Seeing patients and families through change

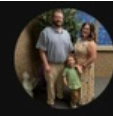
- **Labor and Delivery**
- **Neurology/Rehabilitation**



Labor & Delivery



- **WHERE:** Labor and Delivery units, birthing centers, in-home
 - **WHO:** Laboring parents & their support team. Collaborative care with CNAs, nurses, doctors, doulas, & midwives.
 - **WHAT:** Prepare for labor (train body & mind), regulate breathing, lower blood pressure, pain management & perception, coping mechanisms, mood vectoring, team cohesion, confidence, physical entrainment, decrease anxiety, decrease the need for analgesic medications, support during golden hour and bonding process
- 



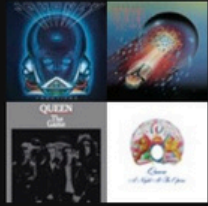
Your Library



Playlists

Podcasts

Albums



Classic Rock

↓ Playlist • Mary DiCamillo



Motown Tunes

↓ Playlist • Mary DiCamillo



K. C-Section Recovery Room

↓ Playlist • Mary DiCamillo



K. C-Section Operating Room

↓ Playlist • Mary DiCamillo



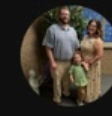
K. C-Section Preparation

↓ Playlist • Mary DiCamillo



K. Epidural Administration

↓ Playlist • Mary DiCamillo



Your Library



Playlists

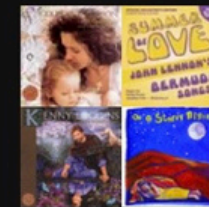
Podcasts

Albums



H. Bonding- Indie/Folk

Playlist • Mary DiCamillo



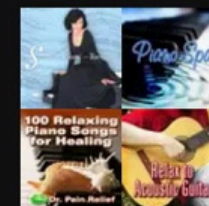
H. Bonding Boy

Playlist • Mary DiCamillo



G. Birth-Celebratory Classical

Playlist • Mary DiCamillo



F. New Age Breathing Baby Do...

Playlist • Mary DiCamillo



F- Guitar Breathing Baby Dow...

Playlist • Mary DiCamillo



E. Imagery- Adagio Film Soun...

Playlist • Mary DiCamillo

Nightly Practice Sessions for labor preparation

1) Talk to baby together



2) Yoga ball



3) Shower

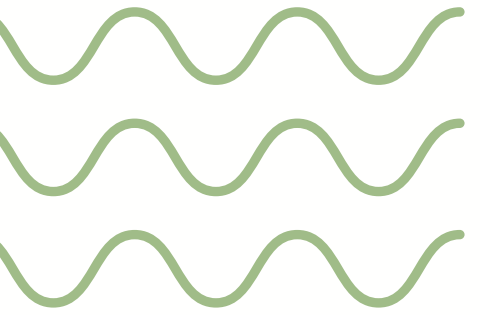


4) Backrub



5) Womb song (if still awake...)

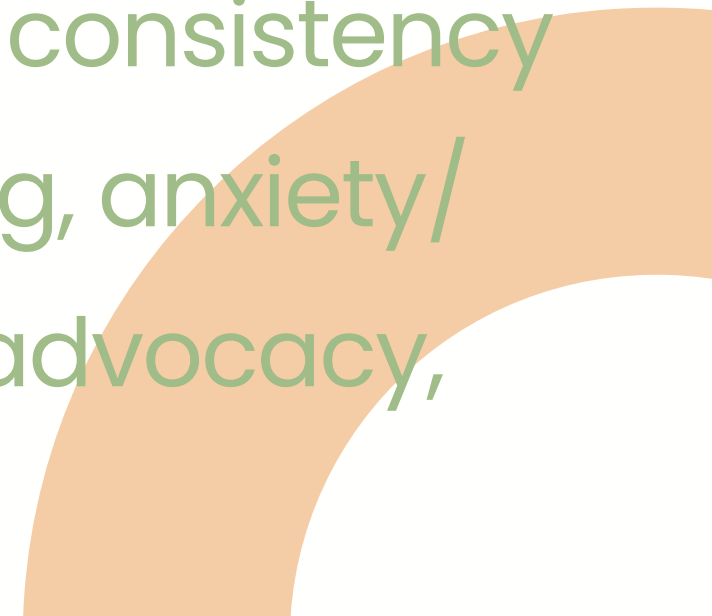




Neuro/Rehab



- **WHERE:** Inpatient, outpatient/clinics, nursing homes, in-home
- **WHO:** Parkinson's, Huntington's, ALS, MS, Stroke, TBI, COPD, Physical rehabilitation/therapy- and their families. Collaborative care with PT, OT, SLP, RT, SW, nurses, doctors.
- **WHAT:** Aphasia, apraxia, dysarthria, speech fluency (prosody, volume, diction, etc.), breath volume & control, gait (cadence, velocity, stride length), reduce falls/improve balance, resilience, emotional release/expression, gross and fine motor control, range of motion (including acceleration and consistency of movement), entrainment, visual neglect, executive functioning, anxiety/depression, self-care tasks, sensory integration, attention, self-advocacy, self-confidence, autonomy



TBI Speech Rehabilitation

R

Gabby Giffords and Music Therapy ABC News Clip

Rachel Gonzalez



DR. OLIVER SACKS

PROF. OF NEUROLOGY & PSYCHIATRY, COLUMBIA UNIV.

abc NEWS
.com

Watch on  YouTube



Stroke Gait Rehabilitation



Neurologic Music Therapy - Rhythmic Auditory Stimulation - Gait Training
MedRhythms



Watch on  YouTube

Nurse using music for gait in PKD



Gait training for Parkinson's patient using music

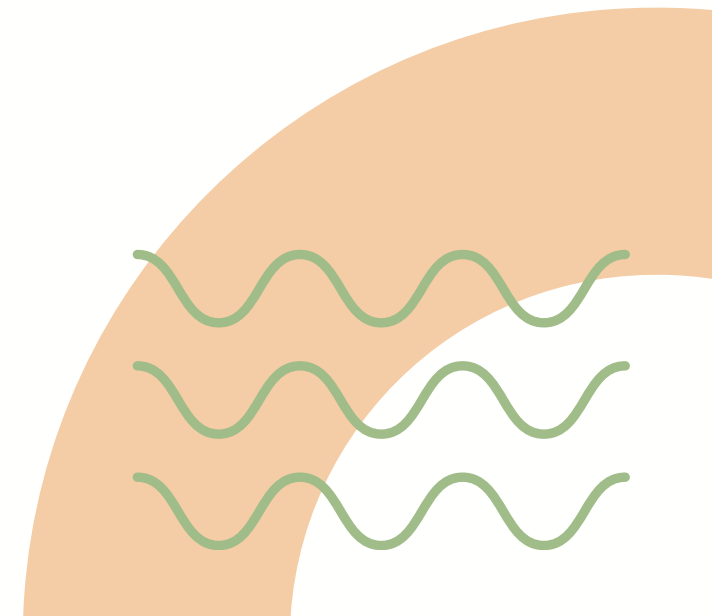
Anicea Gunlock



Watch on  YouTube



Anatomy of a song



The background features several light green musical notes of various sizes and orientations scattered across the page. A small green four-pointed star is located in the bottom right corner. The text is centered at the top in a green, cursive font.

Outro/Fade: Holding the edge of life

- **NICU**
- **ICU/CCU**
- **Hospice**


nicu




- **WHERE:** NICU
- **WHO:** Babies in the NICU and their families
- **WHAT:** Non-nutritive sucking, pain management, decrease stress/anxiety (for the baby and parent), improve sleep, establish and reinforce neural pathways for communication and social interaction, engagement, sensory stimulation, family connectedness, regulate breathing and heart rate, increase oral feeding volume, improve nursing latch




Pacifier-Activated Lullaby (PAL)




 **Music therapy study on the NICU | UCLA Mattel Children's Hospital**
UCLA Health

 From an accredited US hospital



 **Pacifier Activated Lullaby (PAL)**

Watch on   YouTube

ICU



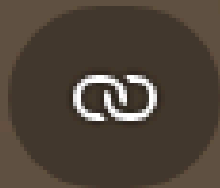
- **WHERE:** Intensive Care Unit
- **WHO:** Respiratory Failure, Sepsis, Cardiac Care, Burns, Metabolic Care, Post-Surgical Complications, Neuro/Trauma, Coma, etc. – and their families. Collaborative care with doctors, nurses, CNAs, OT, RT, PT, SW.
- **WHAT:** Regulate heart rate & breathing, sensory stimulation/integration, pain management, anxiety/depression, isolation, agitation, creative self-expression, meaning making, autonomy, decreased reliance on PRN meds, promote calm arousal states, assist with weaning/extubation/lavage/etc.





Burn victim enjoys music therapy while suffering from severe pain.

rhonda williams



Watch on  YouTube

Hospice

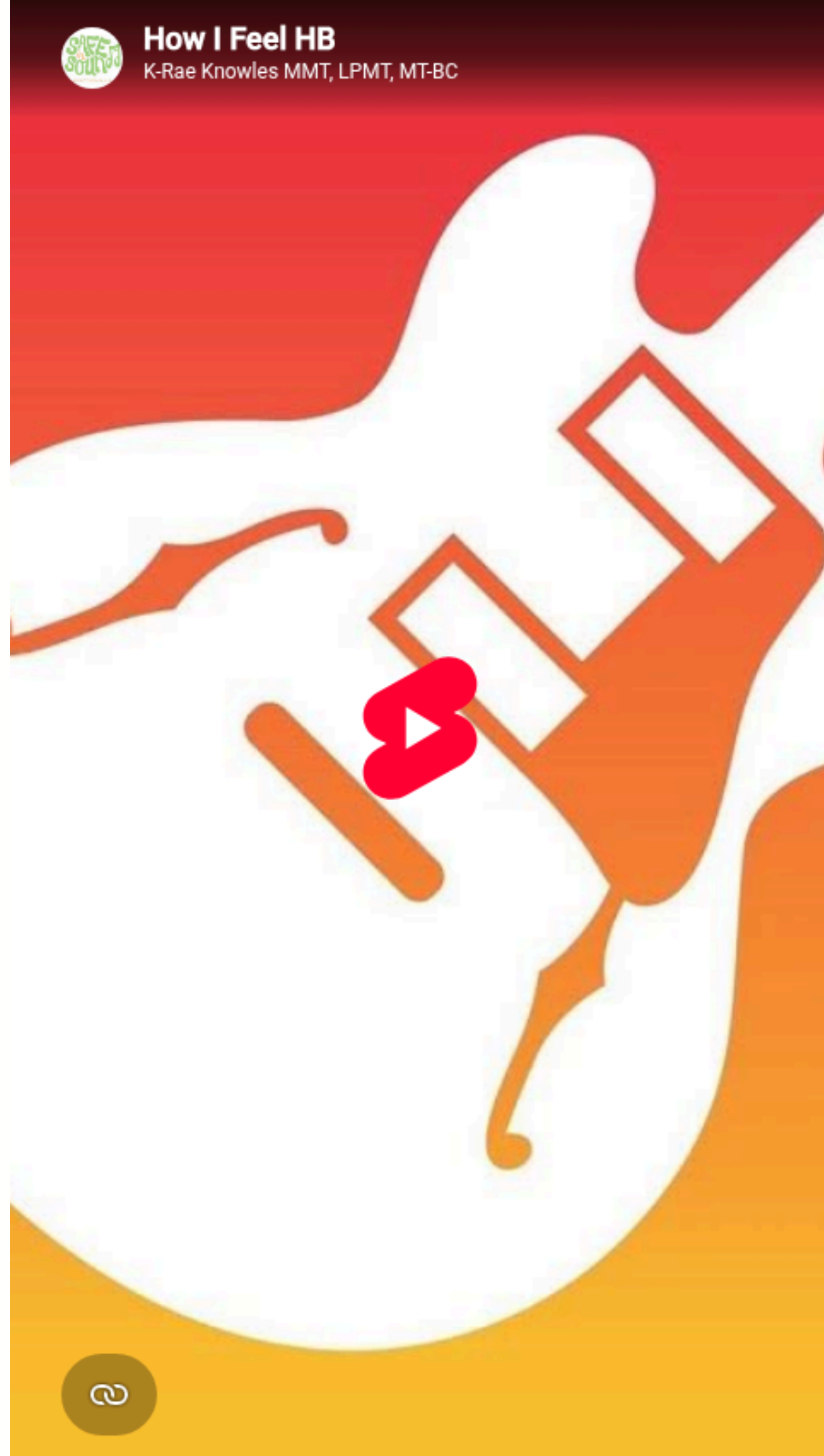
- **WHERE:** Skilled and assisted nursing facilities, hospice homes, hospitals, in-home
- **WHO:** Individuals receiving hospice care and their families. Collaborative care with nurses, CNAs, doctors, chaplains, psychologists, massage therapists, aromatherapists, SW, etc.
- **WHAT:** Life review, relationship completion, funeral planning, spiritual support, pain management, reduced need for PRN medications, anticipatory grief, regulation of heart rate and respiration, engagement, isolation, anxiety/depression, sleep support, validation, meaning-making, legacy projects, procedural support, quality of life, supporting a good death





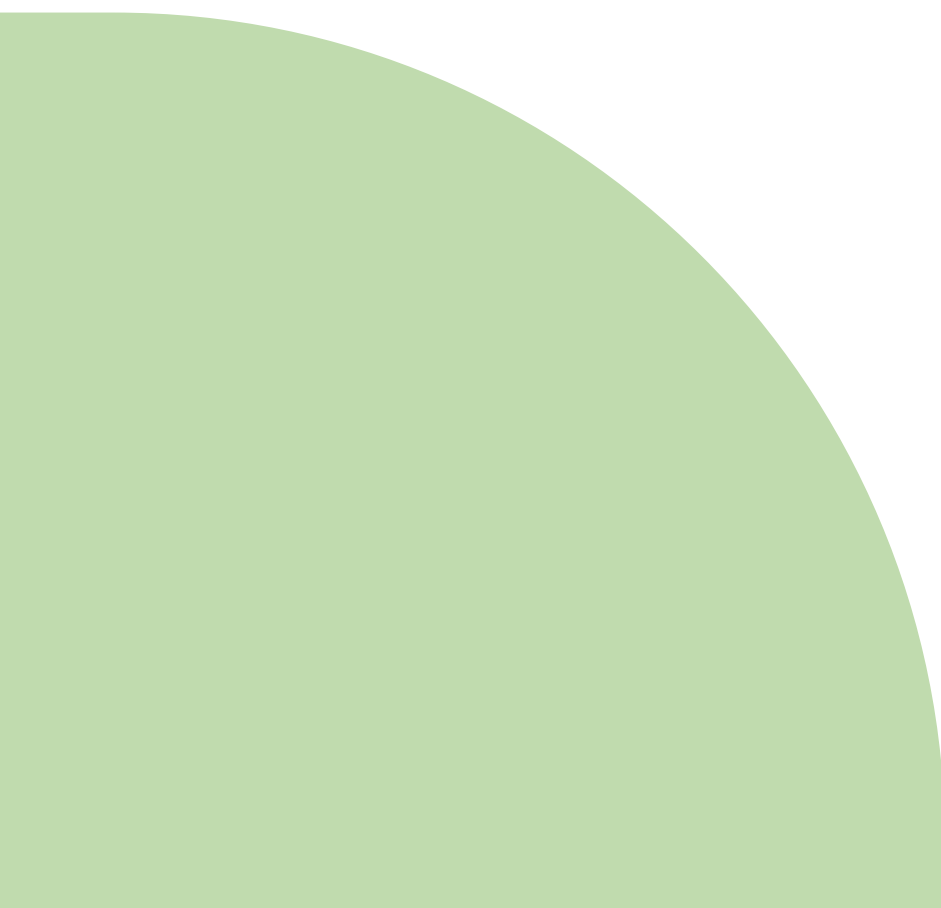
How I Feel HB

K-Rae Knowles MMT, LPMT, MT-BC





Integrate: The Song of Care



Florence Nightingale, in her 1859 "Notes on Nursing:"



"The effect of music upon the sick has been scarcely at all noticed. I will only remark here, that wind instruments, including the human voice, and stringed instruments, capable of continuous sound, have generally a beneficent effect"

"Nursing is an art. and if it is to be made an art, it requires an exclusive devotion, as hard a preparation, as any painter's or sculptor's work."



Healthcare Professionals' Perception of Music Therapy

-“A music therapist and a nurse working in concert with each other allows for a more **comprehensive & holistic plan of care** to be implemented.” (Potvin et al, 2021)

-Healthcare providers expressed “**a greater capacity for expression,**” **connection** with others in the room, and **relaxation** in the moment during music therapy. (Rodriguez et al, 2024)

-Music therapy (simultaneous with invasive/stressful cares) **humanizes care, offers emotional comfort, and fosters connections** between patients and their healthcare providers. (Saldaña et al, 2025)

-“Collaboration between perioperative nurses and music therapists can be beneficial in providing a safe, cost-effective means of managing patients’ **anxiety and pain and reducing the need for pharmacologic intervention** in the perioperative setting. The use of a board-certified music therapist may help to **improve patient outcomes, ease nurse workload, and serve as an adjunct therapeutic modality** that is enjoyable for both patients and staff members.” (Palmer, Lane, & Mayo, 2016)



**Remember- you're already
singing this song.**

Autonomy

Beneficence

Non-Maleficence

Justice

Fidelity

Veracity

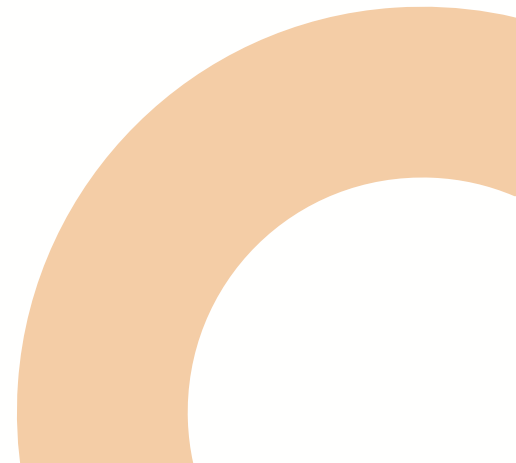
Accountability

**Your verses- walk with
families over time**

**Your chorus- regulate
bodies and brains**

**Your bridge- see patients
and families through
change**

**Your finale/outro- hold the
edge of life**



The Song of Care is not a solo. We accomplish care plan goals together.

We empower the future every time we choose to listen deeply, offer gentler care, and refuse to stop being human together.

From the smallest bedside hum to the loudest pre-op dance party, this is how we know: to be human is to be musical.

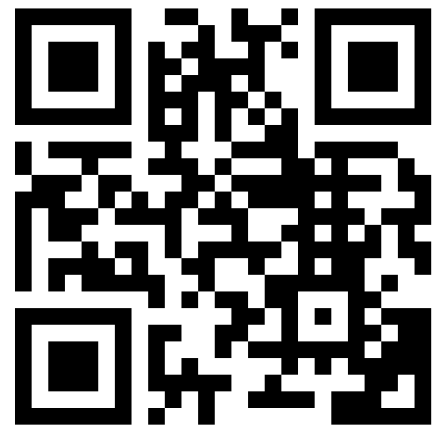


Thank You!

[American Music
Therapy Association:](#)



[Certification Board
for Music Therapists:](#)



[Illinois Association for
Music Therapy:](#)



[Safe in Sound
Music Therapy, LLC:](#)



References

