

Improving behaviour in children with autism

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Credit: David Maddison

Weekly music therapy sessions lasting just an hour can have a positive effect on behaviour in children with autism, reports a paper in *Pertanika Journal* this month. In a study of 41 children, improvements were seen particularly in inattentive behaviours over a ten month period. The researchers hope that their research will help children and young adults with autism to modify behaviour.

US Centers for Disease Control statistics state that one in every 150 children in United States is diagnosed with autism – that is one new diagnosis in every 20 minutes. And the number is on the increase. Music and movement therapy has been used to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals of all ages. interventions can be designed to promote wellness, manage stress, alleviate pain, enhance memory, improve communication, and promote [physical rehabilitation](#).

See C M of the Universiti Sains Malaysia divided the group into two age categories – two to ten and eleven to twenty two – and rated their behaviour on a target behaviour checklist developed specifically for the research. Over a ten month period they alternated two different hour-long sessions of

music therapy and measured the children on the target behaviour checklist on a monthly basis. For behaviours such as [restlessness](#), aggression toward other children, noisiness and tantrums more than half of each group improved by one or two points on the scale.

Some children showed no changes and a couple regressed. Overall the research suggests that the therapy has positive effects on the children's [behaviours](#), but particularly with inattentive behaviour.

More information: See, C. The Use of Music and Movement Therapy to Modify Behaviour of Children with Autism, *Pertanika J. Soc. Sci. & Hum.* 20 (4): 1103 - 1116 (2012)

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