

## When Words are not Enough

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### Case study extract from article originally published in Equilibrium – Haringey magazine for mental health (2008 – issue 30)

Clients who had participated in either group or individual music therapy during their hospital admission were given the opportunity to continue with music therapy for a further six weeks following discharge. Occasionally, if there was a space available and the client expressed a keen interest, music therapy could be extended, subject to periodic reviews. This is one such case.

The client's name has been changed in order to preserve confidentiality.

James is a young man in his late 20's who first became unwell in his teens. He has experienced periods of recovery that enabled him to work, but these periods have been interrupted by relapses, which have led to hospital admissions.

Many of our earlier sessions together focussed around supporting James in coming to terms with a long-term mental issue. This brought up anxieties surrounding the stigma often attached to mental health problems, in particular, whether to tell friends and how to explain periods of unemployment. When faced with these challenges, simple questions from friends such as, "Hi, I haven't seen you for a while, how have you been?" can be a great source of anxiety.

Through improvising music together and talking, James has been able to address some of these anxieties and increase his self-confidence. For example, in earlier sessions, James was reluctant to try instruments he had never played before. (Clients need no prior musical experience to take part in Music Therapy).

Through engaging in shared music-making, where he was able to experience the connections between our music and feel listened to and understood, James has begun to move more freely around the Music Therapy space and try new instruments and different ways of playing. This increased level of confidence within the Music Therapy space has enabled him to try new things in other areas of his life.

As our sessions have progressed, James has been able to explore a number of different issues. He has come to regard the Music Therapy space as a safe place to be, where he is able to share his thoughts and feelings without fear of judgement or rejection.

These are some of James' thoughts about our sessions:

"I think if I didn't have this session, I would be just trying to do everything on my own again."

"It gives me time to reflect on both sides...being admitted and being ill, and then life and society and home and stuff like that. It's helped me in so many different ways."

"I feel that being able to express things through music has allowed me to express stuff that I can't talk about... I think a combination of music and being able to talk about things is the perfect combination for me. If I was just talking, then all the stuff that I couldn't express through talking, it would just be there."

"I think I'm more balanced now than I have ever been."