

# Autism & Sound Therapy



## The problem

Autism is a mystifying condition, which causes children to become emotionally isolated from the world around them. A definite cause is not known, but a contributing factor is believed to be distortion in the reception of sensory information. Many children with autism exhibit extreme sensitivity to noise. Some frequencies are actually painful for them to hear. Dr Tomatis suggests that in order to shut out painful sounds or other unwanted stimuli the child closes down the hearing mechanism so that certain sounds cannot penetrate the consciousness.

On a physiological level, this closing off of the ear is achieved by a relaxation of the muscles of the middle ear. Over time, these muscles lose their tonicity sounds are then imprecisely perceived and as a result, incorrectly analysed. Tomatis believes that the reluctance to communicate in children with autism results from the closing off of their being to auditory input. Although they may understand what is said to them, they have tuned out many of the frequencies in the sound and have thus tuned out the emotional content of the message.

## How Sound Therapy may help

**Sound Therapy may offer a child with autism the opportunity to re-open the listening capacity. The fluctuating sounds produced by the Electronic Ear gradually exercise and tone the ear muscles, teaching the ear to respond to and recognise a wider range of frequencies. As this happens, communication takes on new meanings, and the child begins to respond where before he or she was unreachable.**

Tomatis discovered that because of the way the foetal ear develops, the first sounds heard in utero are high frequency sounds. The child hears not only the mother's heartbeat and visceral noises but also her voice. Re-awakening the child's ability to hear high frequencies re-creates this earliest auditory experience and enables emotional contact to be made with the mother first and then others.

## How to use it

The child should be encouraged to listen to the tapes every day for a period of 30 to 60 minutes or more if desired. Both the music and the story tapes are suitable for children with autism. For children with language difficulties, the *Let's Recite* tape has been a useful addition to the listening program, as it gives the child the opportunity to repeat what is said, encouraging participation, and vocal expression of the new range of frequencies being heard.

In a clinical setting the Sound Therapy treatment of children with autism includes playing the mother's voice filtered through the Electronic Ear. This can now be achieved in the home with the Sonic Brain Activator.

## What it achieves

Children with autism have responded to Sound Therapy by showing a greater interest in making contact and communicating with the people around them. Interactions with their family members have become more affectionate and appropriate. There is often increased eye contact and the children have a longer attention span. They may initiate contact rather than waiting to be approached.

For children without language, vocalisation has increased, initially as screams and then as babbling. Children who can speak may develop a more appropriate use of language, for instance beginning to use more personal pronouns ("I", "you") or first names, and using words to express their feelings. They may begin to laugh and cry at appropriate times. Once children have begun to emerge from their emotional isolation they have shown increasing responsiveness to what they are being taught and to the people who care for them.

## COMMENTS FROM SOUND THERAPY LISTENERS

*"We are seeing amazing changes with her since Sound Therapy. There is a lot more communication. She dances to music now instead of rocking. We actually feel like we have got a little girl!"*

~ PIETRO AND SHAYLENE GAROFALO



For more information, please request our free booklet *Listening Helps Learning* or obtain the book *Why Aren't I Learning?* by Rafaele Joudry available from good bookstores or from **Sound Therapy International Pty Ltd.**



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