

RHYTHM & REGULATION

Within the Rhythm2Recovery model

Below, we have laid out some of the ways our work at Rhythm2Recovery focuses on emotional regulation and impulse control.

In the words of somatic trauma specialist Bessel Van Der Kolk – **‘THE ISSUE OF SELF-REGULATION IS CENTRAL TO TRAUMA TREATMENT’** and that **‘Rhythmical interaction to establish internal sensory integration is important. Connecting people through rhythm is a way of overcoming this frozen sense of separation that traumatized people have with others’**.

We also know that people who have issues with managing their emotions and feelings (Emotional dysregulation) have difficulty in forming healthy relationships and are often socially isolated, suffering increased levels of mental health disorders. It is a skill we all need, to manage the ups and downs of life and adapt to change.

Emotional regulation is a learned behavioural skill – babies are not born with it but learn through parental and social conditioning to develop better coping skills and self-control. So, no matter at what stage of life, or for what reason, when we recognise that we or those we care for, are struggling with this issue we can re-learn to better understand our emotions and respond to them in healthier ways. To manage them rather than let them manage us.

Rhythm has been central to the ways people manage their feelings for thousands of years – and we all employ rhythmic strategies to work through challenging feelings across our lives – for example many of us control and deepen our breathing into a new rhythmic pattern when we are stressed or face a stressful situation. Others may go for a run or get a massage – all examples of rhythmic strategies that impact both mind and body. Young people with ASD use rhythmic rocking and stimming behaviours in the same way. There are many more examples.

Many of us listen to music to shift our emotional state and calm ourselves. Scientific enquiry, particularly from the field of neurobiology, has shown how exposure to rhythmic music can down-regulate negative emotions, and heightened arousal. It has been shown to modulate and reduce anxiety and stress responses and when paired with introspection, as in the rhythm2recovery model, can be particularly effective as an emotional regulation strategy (Webb, Miles & Sheeran, 2012).

In our work at Rhythm2Recovery we have a wide range of exercises developed to address this issue. Some utilise the deep Bass note of the drum to support grounding and mindfulness. Some utilise the drum to represent a loss of control – wild chaotic playing – before practicing reducing such intensity to a calm state. Others focus on practicing holding steady (calm) in the face of external pressures that threaten us with a loss of control.

We have a range of exercises that are cathartic in nature, allowing people to release feelings constructively through the drum, and we can use reflection to focus on other healthy ways of releasing pent up emotion. We also employ bilateral hand and arm movement across the mid-line of the drum, linked to cycles of the breath, that help calm, sooth and regulate. And we use the drum to work with parents and their children in support of co-regulation, learning to de-escalate situations of high arousal.

We’ve all felt the power of music to shift our emotions, and in Rhythm2Recovery we utilise this connection, aligned to modern scientific evidence, to support people having difficulty managing challenging feelings.

Find out more by visiting <http://www.rhythm2recovery.com/>