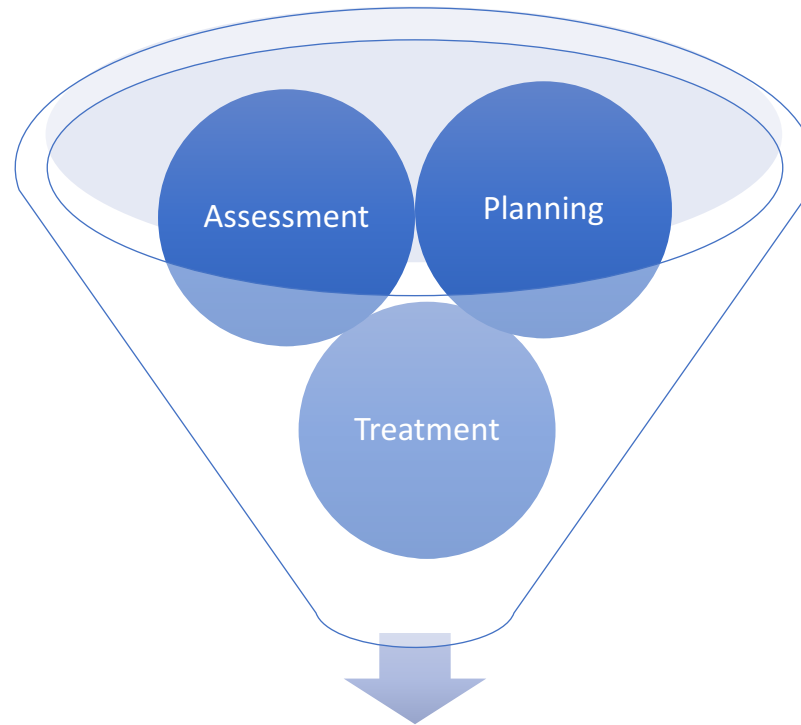




# Music therapy assessment: an overview

Dr. Gustavo Schulz Gattino

# The three main practices/demands in music therapy



Music therapy practice

# Essential questions

- What is assessment in music therapy?
- When does the music therapist assess the client?
- What is assessed in music therapy?
- What is the purpose of an assessment procedure in music therapy?
- What are the types of assessment in music therapy?

# Short answers to essential questions

What is assessment in music therapy?

Preparing, gathering, analyzing, interpreting, concluding, documenting and communicating data about the client.

When does the music therapist assess the client?

At any time during the music therapy process.

What is assessed in music therapy?

Areas of interest linked at least with one of the following domains/pillars: biological; cognitive; developmental; social and personality; and, mental and physical health.

What is the purpose of an assessment procedure in music therapy?

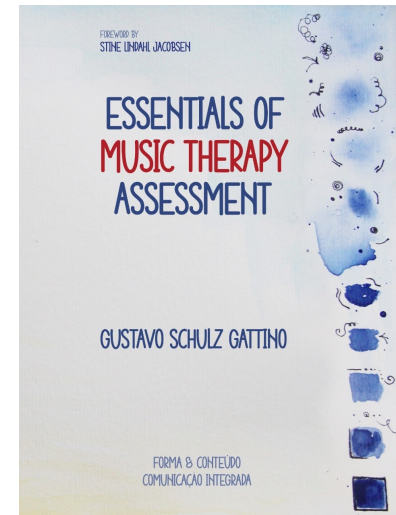
Diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, assessing the benefits of music therapy, assessing potential activities in the initial assessment of the client, and assessment of the music therapy process.

What are the types of assessment in music therapy?

Reviewing, Interviewing, Observing and Testing.

# Updated references about music therapy assessment

- Waldon, E., Jacobsen, S. & Gattino, G. (2018). Music Therapy Assessment: Theory, Research, and Application. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Gattino, G. (2021). Essentials of Music Therapy Assessment. Forma & Conteúdo Comunicação Integrada. Link: <https://vbn.aau.dk/en/publications/essentials-of-music-therapy-assessment>

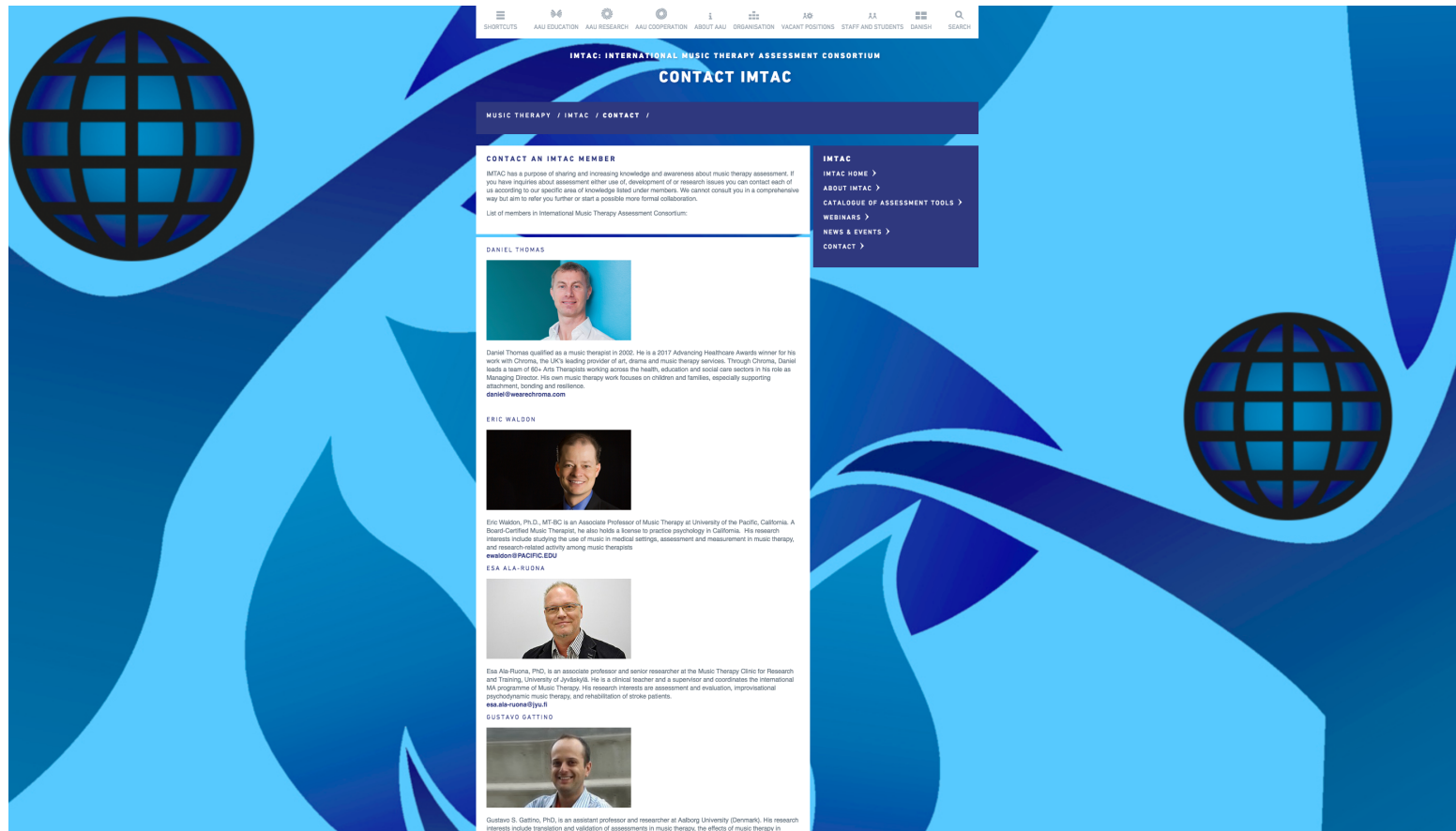


# Updated references about music therapy assessment

- 
- Carpente, J. A., & Aigen, K. (2019). A Music-Centered Perspective on Music Therapy Assessment. *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical and Qualitative Assessment in Music Education*, 243.
- Cripps, C., Tsiris, G., & Spiro, N. (2016). Outcome Measures in Music Therapy: A Resource Developed by the Nordoff Robbins Research Team. Retrieved from: [https://www.nordoff-robbins.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/outcome\\_measures\\_-\\_online\\_version.pdf](https://www.nordoff-robbins.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/outcome_measures_-_online_version.pdf)
- Jacobsen, S. L., & Wigram, T. (2019). Assessment and Clinical Evaluation in Music Therapy. In *Comprehensive Guide To Music Therapy*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

# Updated references about music therapy assessment

- International Music Therapy Assessment Consortium (IMTAC) - <https://www.musictherapy.aau.dk/imtac>



The screenshot displays the website for the International Music Therapy Assessment Consortium (IMTAC). The page is titled "CONTACT IMTAC" and is part of a navigation structure including "MUSIC THERAPY / IMTAC / CONTACT". A sidebar on the right lists navigation options: "IMTAC", "IMTAC HOME", "ABOUT IMTAC", "CATALOGUE OF ASSESSMENT TOOLS", "WEBINARS", "NEWS & EVENTS", and "CONTACT".

The main content area is titled "CONTACT AN IMTAC MEMBER" and explains the consortium's purpose: "IMTAC has a purpose of sharing and increasing knowledge and awareness about music therapy assessment. If you have inquiries about assessment either use of, development of or research issues you can contact each of us according to our specific area of knowledge listed under members. We cannot consult you in a comprehensive way but aim to refer you further or start a possible more formal collaboration." It also states: "List of members in International Music Therapy Assessment Consortium:"

The members listed are:

- DANIEL THOMAS**: Daniel Thomas qualified as a music therapist in 2000. He is a 2017 Advancing Healthcare Awards winner for his work with Chroma, the UK's leading provider of art, drama and music therapy services. Through Chroma, Daniel leads a team of 60+ Arts Therapists working across the health, education and social care sectors in his role as Managing Director. His own music therapy work focuses on children and families, especially supporting attachment, bonding and resilience. [daniel@www.echroma.com](mailto:daniel@www.echroma.com)
- ERIC WALDON**: Eric Waldon, Ph.D., MT-BC is an Associate Professor of Music Therapy at University of the Pacific, California. A Board-Certified Music Therapist, he also holds a license to practice psychology in California. His research interests include studying the use of music in medical settings, assessment and measurement in music therapy, and research-related activity among music therapists. [ewaldon@PACIFIC.EDU](mailto:ewaldon@PACIFIC.EDU)
- ESA ALA-RUONA**: Esa Ala-Ruona, PhD, is an associate professor and senior researcher at the Music Therapy Clinic for Research and Training, University of Jyväskylä. He is a clinical teacher and a supervisor and coordinates the international MA programme of Music Therapy. His research interests are assessment and evaluation, improvisational psychodynamic music therapy, and rehabilitation of stroke patients. [esa.ala-ruona@jyu.fi](mailto:esa.ala-ruona@jyu.fi)
- GUSTAVO GATTINO**: Gustavo B. Gattino, PhD, is an assistant professor and researcher at Aalborg University (Denmark). His research interests include translation and validation of assessments in music therapy, the effects of music therapy in

**What is** assessment in music  
therapy?



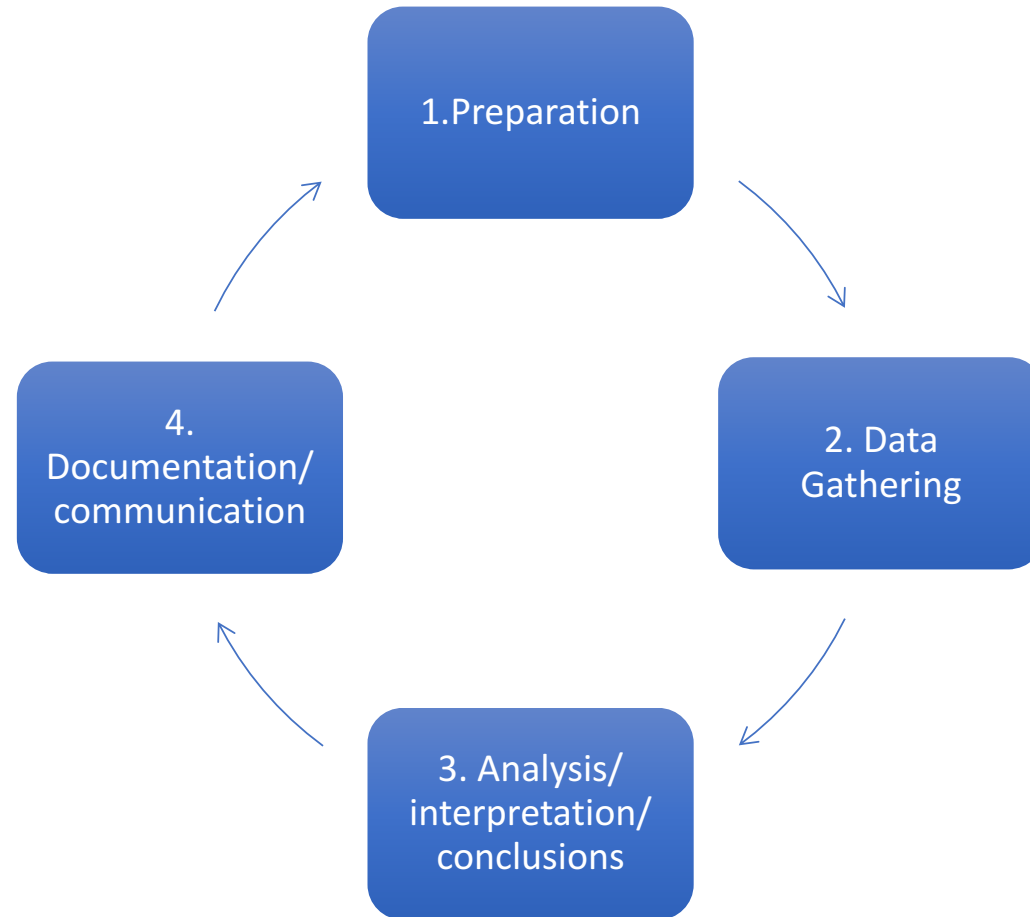
# Definition of assessment in music therapy

- Music therapy assessment can be defined as a structured process of 1) *preparation*; 2) *data gathering*; 3) *analysis, interpretation and elaboration of conclusions* about the assessed data; as well as 4) *documentation and communication* of musical and non-musical data about the music therapy process in order to provide information to take decisions, raise hypotheses, to know more about the client and seek a better understanding of the music therapy process.

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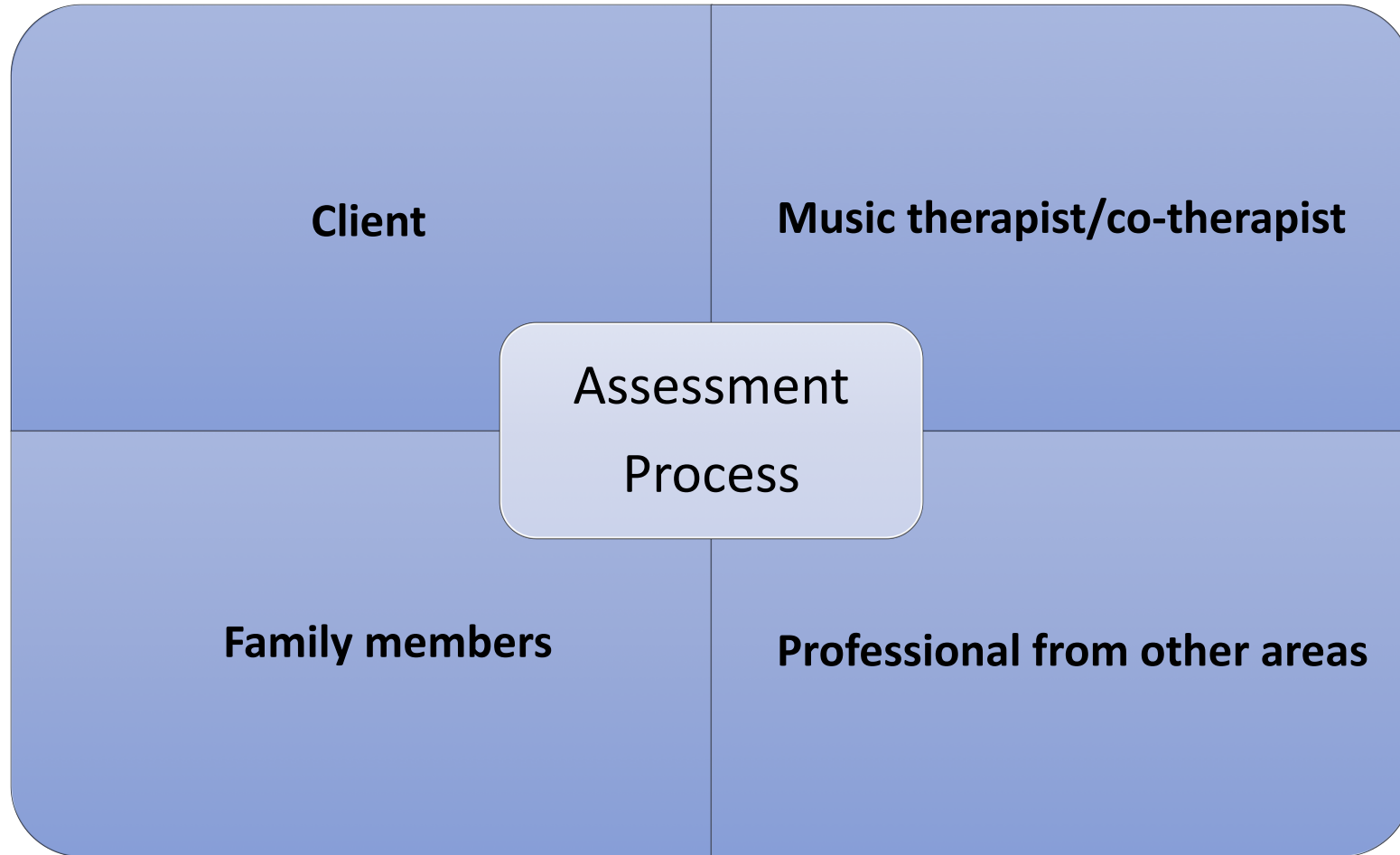
# The assessment process in music therapy



# The assessment stages in music therapy

- **1) Preparation** - at this stage, the music therapist has some basic questions to answer that help in his preparation: 1) why assess? 2) What to assess? 3) How to assess?
- **2) Data gathering** - to apply one or more assessment methods (review of records, interview, observation or testing) to gather information about the client.
- **3) Analysis, interpretation and elaboration of conclusions** - to explore the assessed information (analysis), to explicate the data (interpretation) and to conclude about the date (make decisions, to know more about the client/process, to create hypothesis).
- **4) Documentation and communication** – to register/document the whole process (normally in a written report) and to inform/communicate an audience about the assessment process.

# Possible participants involved in the assessment process



**When** does the music therapist  
assess the client?

# Stages of the music therapy process

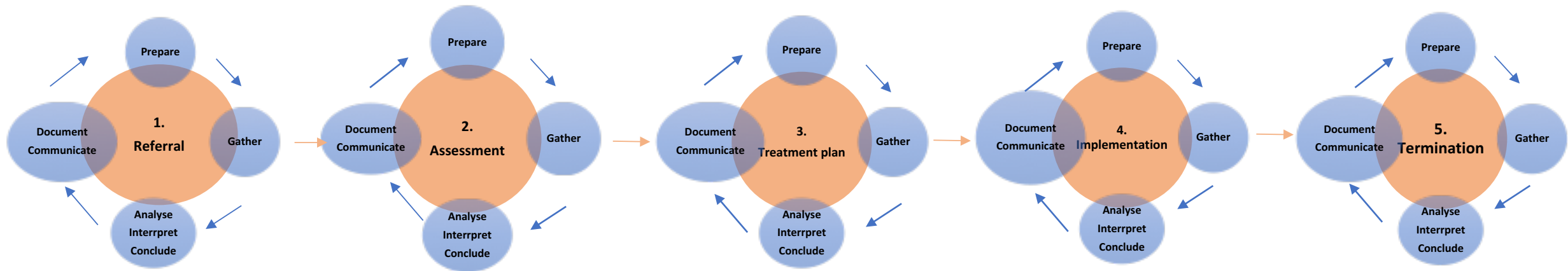
- The music therapy assesses any time during the music therapy process.
- There are different ways to organize the phases of the music therapy process.
- The five main stages are :
  - **1. Referral and acceptance;**
  - **2. Assessment;**
  - **3. Treatment Plan;**
  - **4. Implementation;**
  - **5. Termination.**

# Stages of the music therapy process

- **1. Referral and acceptance** - process to study if the client is eligible or not for music therapy.
- **2. Assessment** - it assesses intramusical and intermusical aspects, resources and difficulties, and how the client relates his/her main problem (reason for referral) with his/her musical expression
- **3. Treatment Plan** - elaboration of a plan (document) containing the results of the assessment and the therapeutic goals.
- **4. Implementation** - it implements the music therapy treatment based on four music therapy methods (improvisation, songwriting, recreation and receptive experiences) to achieve the therapeutic goals. Verification of the results obtained during the treatment (evaluation).
- **5. Termination** - finalization of the music therapy process (planned or as a result of external factors).



# Relationship between the stages of the *assessment process* and the stages of the *music therapy process*

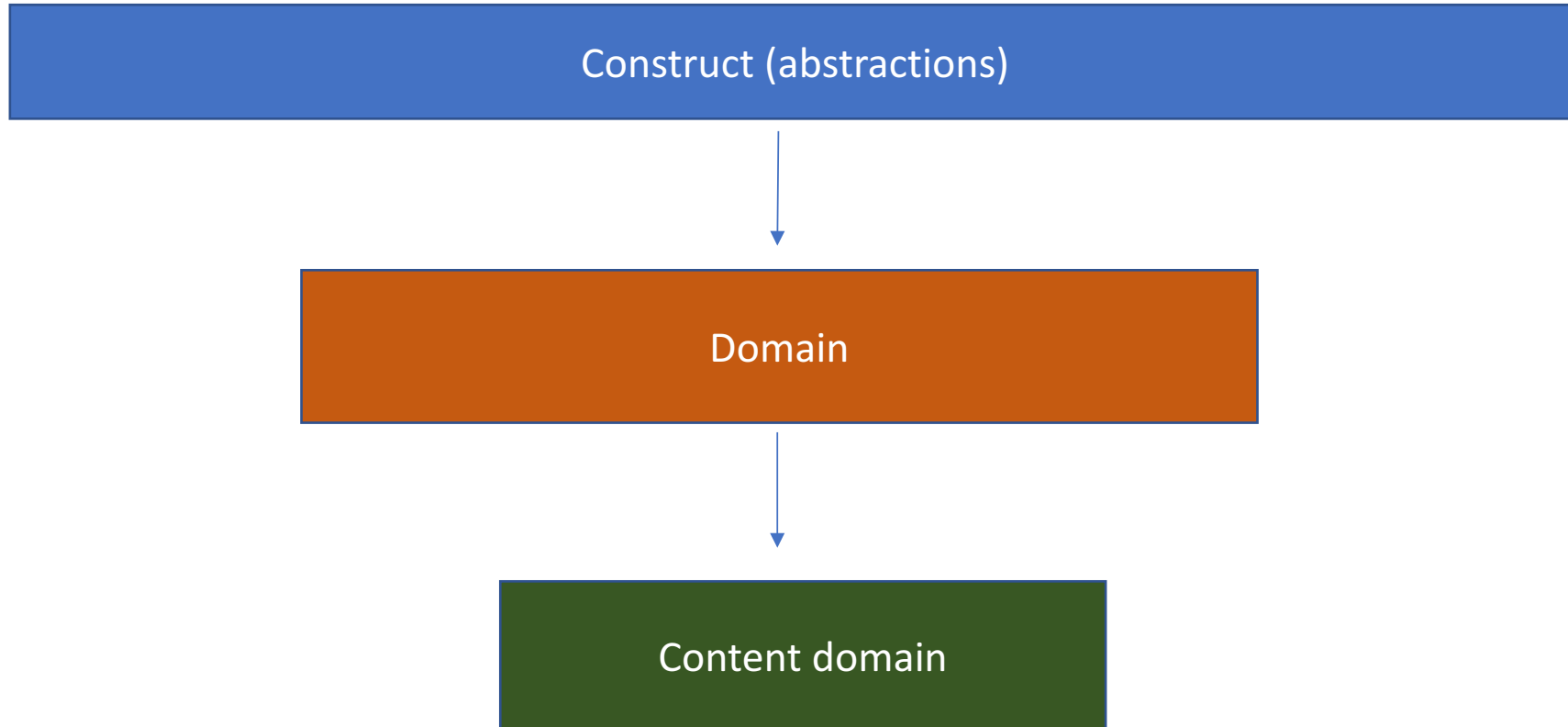


# Exceptional situations where the music therapy process occurs differently

- **Brief music therapy** - the therapist has only one session (or few sessions) and therefore must perform the six steps in just one meeting (focal music therapy process).
- **Group sessions where patients are always different** - the therapist tries to perform all six steps in a meeting (focal music therapy process).
- **Group sessions when there is a small variation in the participants** - more general therapeutic objectives according to the group's focus.
- **Group sessions with a large number of participants** - for groups with more than six participants, the music therapist usually does not set individual goals, but group goals.
- **When the music therapist is unable to conduct face-to-face sessions** - the objectives of the sessions or online meetings must maintain the same objectives of each stage of the process.

What is assessed in music therapy?

# Construct – Domain – Content Domain



# Work definition of Construct (Waldon, Jacobsen & Gattino 2018)

- Any element created by the human mind that is not directly observable.
- Linked to concepts, ideas, theoretical entities, hypotheses or inventions.
- Designate traits, processes or characteristics.
- Some constructs are easier to translate into behaviors (fine motor skills) compared to others (creativity). In other words, there are more abstract and other less abstract constructs.
- The assessment in music therapy observes the manifestation of the constructs through behaviors, traits, action patterns and document analysis by the patient.
- The manifestations of the constructs may or may not be linked to musical events.

# Construct –domain – content domain

- **Construct-** any element created by the human mind that is not directly observable (abstraction).Linked to concepts, ideas, theoretical entities, hypotheses or inventions. Designate traits, processes or characteristics.
- *Example of constructs:* musicality, communication, social skills, spirituality, etc.
- **Domain** – an area or field of study that represents part of the construct.
- *Examples of domains:* social communication, joint attention, oral motor, skills, improvisation skills, etc.
- **Content domain** - a clearly defined body of knowledge, skills, abilities, aptitudes, or tasks that can be assessed.
- *Examples of contents* – behaviors, thoughts, words, patterns of behaviors, gestures, musical parameters, phenomena, facial expressions, etc.

# The five big pillars

- When we consider what we assess, it is important also to reflect about the content of the five pillars in Psychology.
- All the constructs/content domains/attributes are related with these five pillars
- A domain refers to specific aspects of growth and change.
- They can be classified into five major groups (known as the five pillars in psychology).
- **Pillar 1:** biological (eg, Neuroscience, sensation, consciousness) .
- **Pillar 2:** cognitive (eg, cognition, memory, perception, intelligence).
- **Pillar 3:** Development (eg, Learning, lifespan development, language)
- **Pillar 4:** Social and Personality (eg Social, Personality, Emotion, Multicultural, spirituality, Gender, Motivation).
- **Pillar 5:** Mental and physical health (eg Abnormal, health, therapies)
- *Everything we assess in music therapy (area or focus of assessment) is linked to one of these five domains.*

# Some of the major areas ( domains) assessed in music therapy

- Musicality
- Expressive communication
- Receptive communication
- Social aspects
- Gross motors skills
- Fine motor skills
- Oral motor skills
- Emotional aspects
- Spirituality
- Multicultural aspects
- Cognition
- Sensory aspects
- Help or support needs
- Perception about one's health
- Perception about one's life



# Different types of data assessed in music therapy (content domain)

- Qualitative, quantitative or mixed-data.
- The areas assessed in music therapy need to be verified through different types of concrete information about the client:
  - *1. Patterns of behavior;*
  - *2. Specific behaviors (actions);*
  - *3. Gestures, postures and body movements;*
  - *4. Facial expressions;*
  - *5. Vocalizations and use of the voice in general;*
  - *6. Verbal discourse;*
  - *7. Musical manifestations according to the different musical parameters: phrasing, melodic aspects, harmonic aspects, tonality aspects, rhythmic aspects, texture aspects, dynamic aspects, form and timbre aspects.*

**What is the purpose** of an  
assessment procedure in music  
therapy?

# Purposes of music therapy assessment (Wigram, Jacobsen & Rasmussen, 2019)

- A) **Diagnostic assessment** - to obtain evidence to support a diagnostic hypothesis.
- B) **General assessment** - identify the general needs of the client from a holistic perspective and recommend the relevant intervention.
- C) **Assessment of the music therapy intervention** - to obtain evidence to support the value of music therapy as an intervention.
- D) **Pre-treatment assessment** - to determine in the first two-three sessions a therapeutic intervention relevant to the client.
- E) **Assessment of the effectiveness of the treatment** - to assess the effectiveness of the music therapy near the conclusion of the treatment.

What are the types of  
assessment in music therapy?

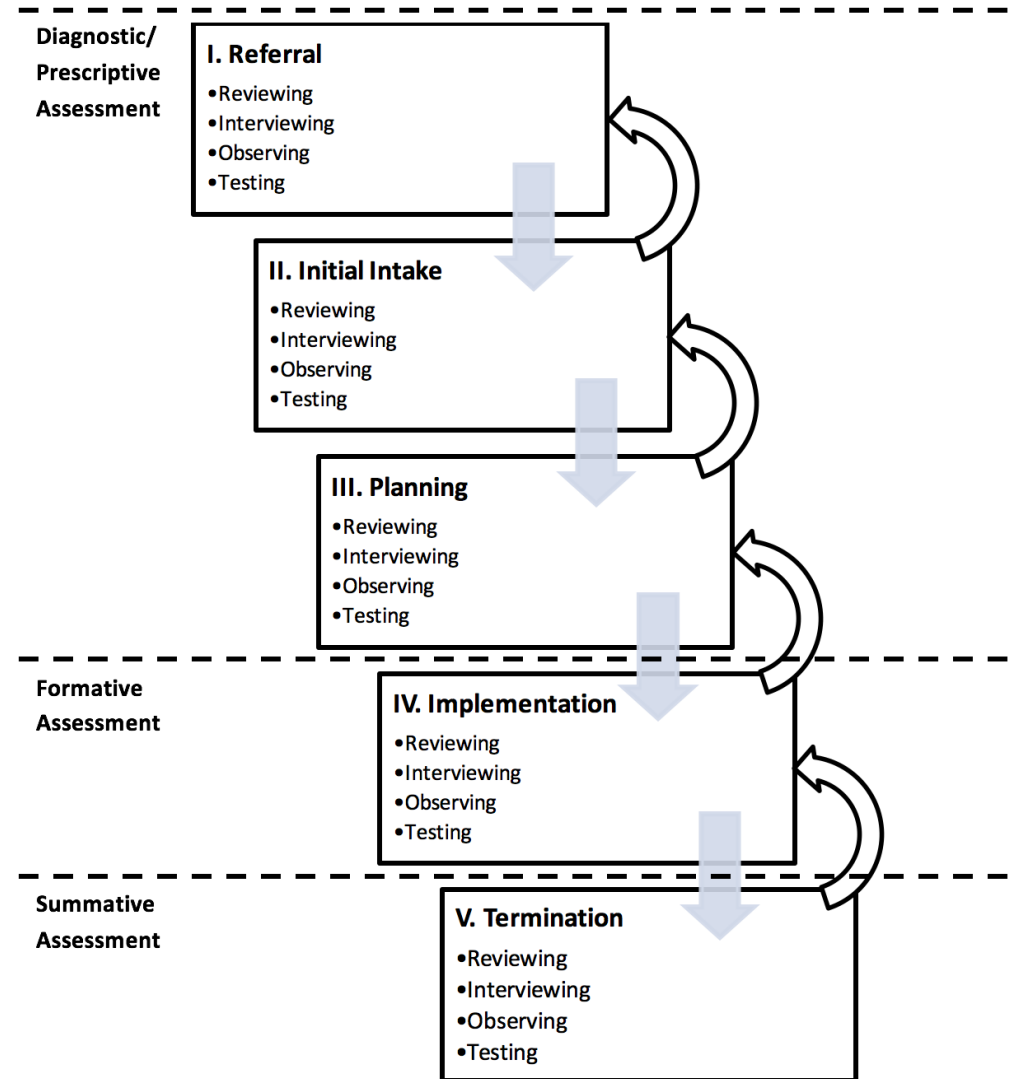
# The RIOT model (Waldon & Gattino, 2018)

- The four assessment methods (or processes) form the acronym RIOT:
- **REVIEWING, INTERVIEWING, OBSERVING AND TESTING.**
- Review records, documents (e.g. scientific articles) or other artefacts (e.g. music score);
- Interviews (structured or non-structured, self-developed or a standard interview);
- Observations (qualitative or quantitative);
- Use of tests / measures (e.g. scales, checklists, inventories).

# The RIOT model

- There is no predetermined order for these assessment methods (ie, the review does not precede interviews, observation and testing).
- These methods vary according to the clinical context in which some can occur simultaneously.
- For example, a music therapist working in an acute medical center conducts observations simultaneously with interview methods.

# RIOT model



Central terms in the context of  
assessment in music therapy



# Use of the term "standard"

- The standardized term is often misunderstood.
- In practice, this refers mainly to two characteristics of tests and measurements: uniformity and normative comparison.
- According to Urbina (2014), uniformity refers to the consistency with which test items are developed, administered and developed, and the client's response is rated / interpreted.

# Use of the term "standard"

- Most often, the standardized term is associated with the establishment of norms to estimate the performance of the examinees compared to the performance of those to whom the measure is intended (Waldon, Jacobsen & Gattino 2018).

Waldon, E., Jacobsen, S. & Gattino, G. (2018). Assessment in Music Therapy: Psychometric and Theoretical Considerations. In Music Therapy Assessment: Theory, Research, and Application (pp. 42-65). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

# Assessment tool (Waldon & Gattino, 2018)

- Any device, product, or procedure used to collect information in a clinical situation
- **EXAMPLES:** protocols, electronic devices, tests.

Note: Not all assessment tools are tests.

# Measurements (Waldon & Gattino, 2018)

- A number
- Quantifiable representation of a major clinical phenomenon.
- **EXAMPLES:** counts, weights, distances, test scores

# Validity

- The degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of conclusions drawn from some form of assessment connected with its construct.
- ***In other words, validity is a quality verification of some proprieties of an assessment form.***
- Validation is a *continuum* process (rather than a product).
- *It is not correct to state whether or not a tool is valid.*

# Validity

- For each population or purpose of use, there is different validity evidence of the assessment used.
- Validity is more connected with tests.
- Validity has multiple forms, depending on the research question and on the particular type of inference being made.

# Validity

- The five major types of test validity are:
  - **Validity based on content evidence**
  - **Validity based on internal structure evidence**
  - **Validity based on similar measures evidence**
  - **Validity based on on external criteria evidence**
  - **Validity based on consequential evidence**

# Reliability

- Reliability, in a general sense, is understood as the consistency of the scores in the repetitions of a test procedure, regardless of how this consistency is estimated or reported (Waldon, Jacobsen & Gattino, 2018).

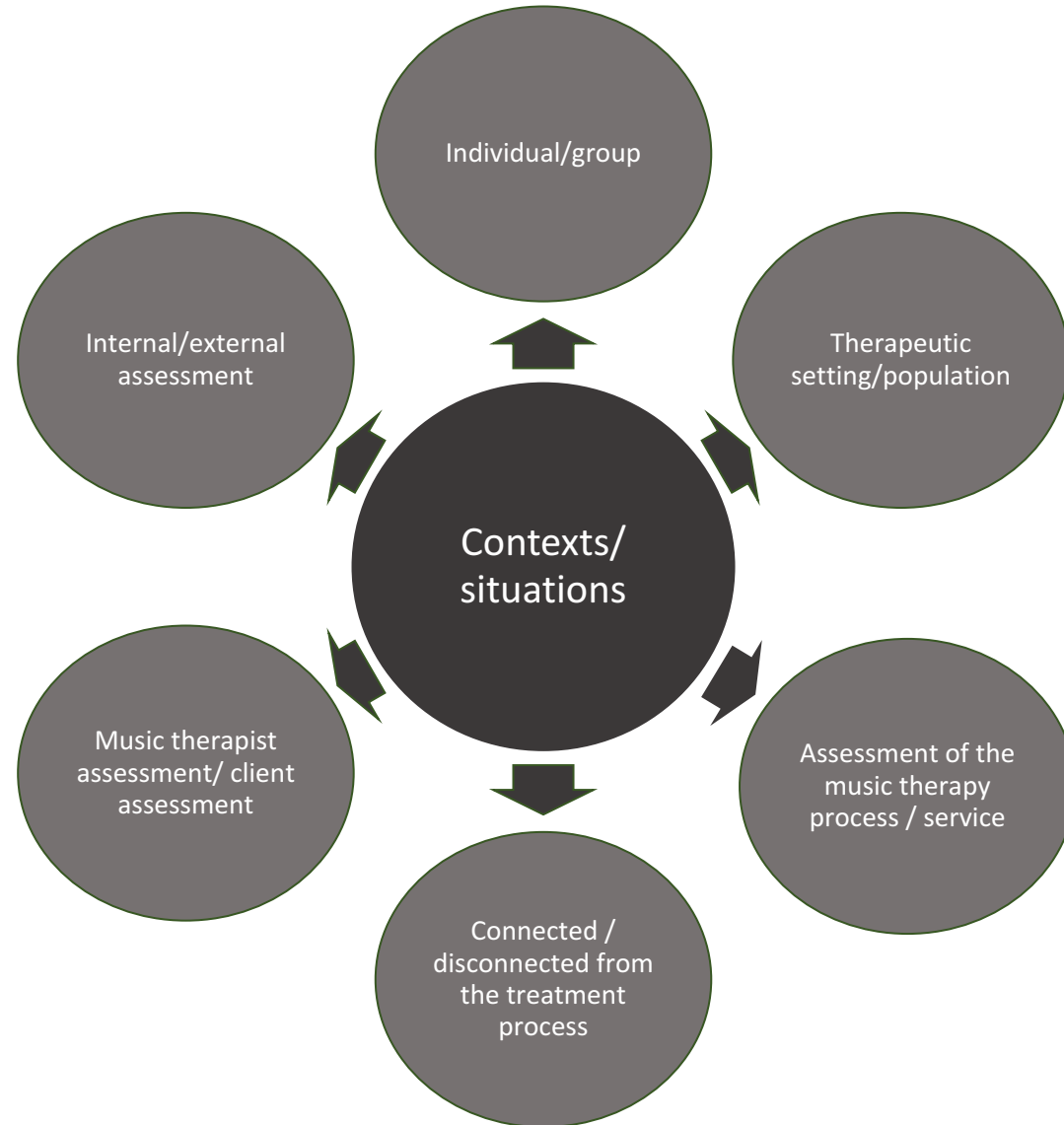
- Therefore, reliability explains whether an assessment procedure provides the same results whenever it is used under the same conditions.

Most common types of reliability: internal consistency, inter-rater agreement, test-retest, different forms for the same test.



The different contexts/situations  
of assessment in music therapy

# Main contexts/situations concerning music therapy assessment



# Factors related with the assessment processes

- Focusing on available literature, Isenberg-Grzeda (1988) collected four factors that influence the ways in which music therapists perform assessments in various populations. These factors include:
- **Music** -which includes the therapist's musical skills and the extent to which music is perceived as a tool or as centre of the process.
- **Theoretical/philosophical framework** (which comes as a result of a personal formation or philosophy based on the experience or culture of the therapist);

# Main theoretical/philosophical frameworks in music therapy (part 1)

Model / approach / orientation	Assessment characteristics
Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM)	Understand the user's verbal discourse before, during, and after imagination travels; assessment of the individual's physical and emotional reactions during the travel, as well as analyze the mandalas elaborated throughout the process.
Feminist perspectives in music therapy	Perform the assessment from a collaborative perspective and need to consider each person as unique within their current condition and the different facets of their own history.
Free Improvisation Music Therapy	Assessment of the musical information according to different types of responses (instrumental, listening, vocal, from other areas) from the sessions.
Behavioral Music Therapy	Assessment of the behaviours or behaviour patterns. These behaviours can be assessed in their natural environment or within the music therapy session.

# Main theoretical/philosophical frameworks in music therapy (part 2)

Model / approach / orientation	Assessment characteristics
Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy	Assessment of the relationships between music therapist and user, of musical communication, social interaction, of the musical responses experienced within the process.
Music-centred music therapy based on development and relationship	Assessment from the user's musical interactions and responses at different levels, especially considering musical-emotional aspects, cognitive and perception aspects, as well as preferences, perceptual efficiency and self-regulation for emotional responses.
Aesthetic Music Therapy	Understand the evaluation process from the use of improvisation, with musical dialogue as the main element of study.
Psychodynamic music Therapy	Assessment from a subjective perspective where analysis and interpretation are fundamental to understand the different dynamics and experiences of this process.

# Main theoretical/philosophical frameworks in music therapy (part 3)

Model / approach / orientation	Assessment characteristics
Family-centered music therapy	Understand inter and intrapersonal relationships within the family context. The family is understood as a complex organism within different systems, where these systems interact and can generate new systems from the flow of interactions
Community music therapy	Assessment of groups from the problems and possibilities of music and health in society from a psychosociocultural perspective centred on the musical cultivation of personal and social well-being.
Neurological music therapy	Monitor the level of functioning of the user during the therapy process and direct the choice of forms of treatment.

# Factors related with the assessment processes

- **Client population** (which refers to the level of skills or specific diagnoses of the person being assessed);
- **The Institution** (which relates to the particular requirements of the facility or the persons requesting the assessment).



Thank you!

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