

# Could HealthRHYTHMS Help Reduce "The Columbine Effect"?

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New Study Demonstrates Statistically Significant Improvements in Instrumental Anger

According to a study published in the June issue of the medical journal, *Advances in Mind-Body Medicine*, there is a new, highly cost-effective strategy for empowering success with at-risk youth. Instrumental anger is the clinical term used to describe a delayed expression of emotion, including revenge or retaliation, such as what some believe may have precipitated the massacre at Columbine High School, often referred to as the *Columbine Effect*. According to principal researcher Barry Bittman, MD this groundbreaking study has demonstrated statistically significant improvements in the level of instrumental anger in addition to improvements in school/work performance and behavior toward others, with less depression, reactive anger and interpersonal problems than a control group who did not participate in the music making activities.

**"This is an accessible, affordable and sustainable strategy that can positively impact juvenile rehabilitation."** Barry Bittman, MD

The research was conducted at the Bethesda Children's Home in Meadville, Pa., which is a court-referred residential treatment facility. And 52 adolescents participated in a structured recreational music making (RMM) protocol as part of their rehabilitation process. This strategy involves enhancements to the HealthRHYTHMS Group Empowerment Drumming protocol, essentially customizing it for use with at-risk youth populations. Study participants were comprehensively evaluated in the research study, which spanned more than a year.

The HealthRHYTHMS Adolescent protocol is suitable for the majority of adolescents including many facing emotional, cognitive or learning challenges, because the protocol creates an opportunity to participate at one's own level. With all the billions of dollars spent each year to isolate juvenile delinquents from society, **this program offers hope** that more troubled youths can be rehabilitated and learn to **discover their own unique worth** and share that gift with society in constructive ways, reducing recidivism and its fiscal ripple effect. "In addition to generating positive societal impact, this unique intervention could save our nation billions of dollars." Barry Bittman, MD

After a group from the study concluded, a young man referred to as "Lionel" (to protect his identity) was discharged from the program at Bethesda. HealthRHYTHMS Endorsed Facilitator Margaret Sowry recalls that mid-way through the fall semester, the facility received a telephone call from the principal of the school that Lionel attends. "I don't know what happened there at your facility, but Lionel is a changed young man. He attends school every day, he studies hard,

plays basketball and is planning a future. Whatever took place there **transformed him and gave him hope.**" *Read Lionel's Story*

### **Could music-making be the “glue” which facilitates cohesion allowing cognitive behavioral therapy to stick?**

This research demonstrates the incredible transformational power of HealthRHYTHMS. And in a broader sense this amazing new study builds on Dr. Bittman's previous research, pointing to the significance of the music therapy profession by further demonstrating the **real value of music**. It begs the question, can music-making can be the glue which facilitates cohesion allowing cognitive behavioral therapy to stick? In my opinion Bittman's study both spotlights the effectiveness of the HealthRHYTHMS adolescent protocol and for those who are listening closely, speaks to the potential power of including a board-certified music therapist at the table in social-service work.

Recreational music-making strategies such as the research-based HealthRHYTHMS program which do not require prior musical experience are not a substitute for traditional music therapy or music education. Yet this program is embraced by many musicians and music-therapists because it is an evidence-based tool which is versatile, user-friendly and can be life-changing. HealthRHYTHMS uses the drum, not as a performance medium, but as a tool for communication and personal expression. The study concludes that this innovative protocol for adolescents can also be readily utilized by behavioral health professionals without prior musical experience.

There are more significant findings in this tremendous research than can be easily addressed in a short article. So be sure to read the research paper to gain a more complete understanding of all the powerful implications for success with at-risk youth demonstrated by this study.

**Obtain a copy of the full published research study: <http://www.advancesjournal.com/adv/>**

#### Reference

Bittman, B., Dickson, L., Coddington, K. (2009) Creative Musical Expression as a Catalyst for Quality-of-life Improvement in Inner-city Adolescents Placed in a Court-referred Residential Treatment Program. *Advances in Mind-Body Medicine*.