



---

## **“I feel more like myself.” – Turning points and experienced changes in music therapy**

“Mä oon jotenkin ehkä enemmän oma itseni.” – Käännekohtia ja koettuja muutoksia musiikkiterapiassa

**Tiia-Liina Raittila**

**Esa Ala-Ruona**

What is the therapeutic experience like for participants? What kind of turning points do they recognise during the therapy and what kind of changes after it? How do they experience the role of music in the process?

This presentation discusses participant experiences on a music therapy process that lasted for six weeks (12 sessions, 60 min each). The participants were adults with depression, anxiety, work-related stress and/or exhaustion. Based on reflective interviews with the participants (n=16) we will present preliminary results on how they experienced the music therapy process, what turning points and changes they recognised, and what was the role of music in the process and in their everyday lives. The interviews were conducted after 6 months follow-up testing.

The data was collected as a part of a large-scale music therapy trial (n=200) on Music therapy for depression-related disorders (iMTDep) at the Centre of Excellence in Music, Mind, Body and Brain at the University of Jyväskylä. The main intervention was the Integrative Improvisational Music Therapy (IIMT). In this trial we applied a mixed methods design to explore both the efficacy of the therapy model, and also the dynamics of therapeutic change, i.e. how the participants experienced their therapy, and what kind of factors were related to individual therapeutic changes.

IIMT and the additional components of music listening and/or vibroacoustic treatment facilitate cycles of therapeutic processing between music listening, music making and therapeutic discussion. The reflective therapeutic discussion includes the levels of thoughts, memories, images, emotions and bodily sensations.



Our priority was to take good care of the participants throughout the process and allow for an extensive level of individual experience in an RCT-setting. Despite the brief duration of the intervention, it can be viewed as a part of a longer process of therapeutic change and individual journey of recovery.

### **Biography**

**Tiia-Liina Raittila, MA**, is a music therapist working as a Doctoral Researcher at the Centre of Excellence in Music, Mind, Body and Brain, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. Her main interests are music therapy interventions, therapeutic change in music therapy processes and music therapy in treatment of mood disorders.

**Esa Ala-Ruona, PhD**, is an Associate Professor of Music Therapy at the Centre of Excellence in Music, Mind, Body and Brain, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. He is a music therapist and integrative psychotherapist (advanced level) working as a researcher, clinical teacher, and supervisor at the JYU Music Therapy Clinic for Research and Training. His research interests are in music therapy assessment and evaluation, and in studying therapeutic interaction, meaning making and clinical processes in multimodal music therapy. His special expertise lies on creating therapy and training models, as well as clinical practice of integrative music psychotherapy, and vibroacoustic therapy.

### **Recent Publications**

Ala-Ruona E. (2024). **Integrative music therapy for depression-related disorders.** *ISRCTN The UK's Clinical Study Registry*. <https://doi.org/10.1186/ISRCTN26812986>

Leandertz, M., & Ala-Ruona, E. (2024). **The multimodal vibroacoustic music therapy for functional neurological disorder: The MTFUND clinical protocol and initial impressions from multiple perspectives.** *Approaches, First View*. <https://doi.org/10.56883/ajjmt.2024.395>

Raittila, T-L., Taipale, M., Erkkilä, J. & Ala-Ruona, E. (2025, in press). **Music therapy for depression, anxiety and work-related stress and burn-out: a narrative review.** *Psychiatria Fennica*