

## **SOUND BASED THERAPIES: THE TOMATIS METHOD**

By Dorinne Davis, MA, CCC-A, FAAA, RCTC, BARA  
The Davis Center, Succasunna, NJ

The next in the series of articles on sound based therapies, will discuss the Tomatis Method. Dr. Alfred Tomatis, a French physician and researcher, is the father of all sound based therapies. Dr. Tomatis began his career helping opera singers to relearn the use of their ears, which helped their voice projection and quality. His pursuits began 10 years of research which proved that “the voice produces what the ear hears”. This became the Tomatis Effect.

He theorized that the ear is an integrator for the entire nervous system and that we listen with our whole body. The ear affects the body’s ability to integrate information for hearing, listening, motor control, communication, and learning, and helps bring about cortical impulses in the brain.

He further developed patented equipment and a method that proved his theories. This became the Tomatis Method. His goal was to improve functioning of the entire ear, voice, speech quality, motor communication, and general communication. The method affects the entire nervous system. The Method presents sound to the body via bone and air conduction through patented equipment which creates random delays. After a period of time, the listener becomes more aware of the fine sound differences within the words to which they are listening. Listening becomes easier. Attention is more focused. Comprehension becomes more meaningful. And the person appears to be more connected to the world around him.

Tomatis’ patented equipment is called the Electronic Ear and includes a set of headphones which utilize bone and air conduction, a microphone and special filters. The client listens to specially recorded music formatted by Dr. Tomatis. The typical listening protocol requires listening for 2 hours a day for 15 days, then 30 days off, followed by another 15 days of listening (which may be a combination of 8 and 7 days as determined). Continuation programs may be necessary to maintain the client’s progress.

During their listening, the participant may draw, paint, do puzzles, sleep, engage in discussion, or play games. Activities are also encouraged to stimulate the reflexive and sensory systems.

There are passive and active phases to listening. The passive phase involves listening to filtered music (Mozart, Gregorian Chant, the mother’s voice) which is modified by the Electronic Ear. In the active phase, the client speaks into a microphone and repeats words, phrases, and sentences. The client’s ear is conditioned to hearing their own voice, now with a good quality, and to maintaining the changes achieved during their listening.

The trainings impact occurs at three levels of impact: functional, emotional, and relational. At the functional level, the connection between the cochlea and vestibular system are enhanced. Dr. Tomatis determined that the cochlea perceives and processes external input through language and the vestibular

system perceives and processes internal input through posture and body movement. The two systems work together to bring harmony to the body.

The emotional level incorporates one's desire to listen which can be affected by such things as illness, the environment, response to negative impact, or an accident. Some people learn to 'tune out' sound which impedes listening. The third level, the relational level, incorporates how one relates to others. Behavioral problems, learning disorders, socialization skills can all be impacted.

The results of the Tomatis Method vary with the individual. Clients have reported the following changes: more focused, more connected with the world around them, more verbally articulate, more interested in conversations with others, an increased sense of self and well-being, an increased ability to socially interact, and for some such as the autistic population, an increase in language skills.

Although not designed to help specific anomalies, the following types of problem areas have been helped: attention span, articulation errors, speech and language disorders, reading and spelling problems, social interaction, communication skills, sound awareness, thinking skills, and personal well-being.

Dr. Tomatis' foresight and interest in the world of sound and its impact on the body opened a world of possibilities for future research. His work demonstrated that the body's response to sound can affect listening, learning, and well-being.

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