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One woman is teaching parents to connect with their developmentally disabled children through music.

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Transcript

Music Therapy Hits the Right Notes for Patients

BRIAN WILLIAMS, anchor:
Our Making a Difference report tonight is all about the power of music and the power of an inspiring woman, specifically, a woman in Atlanta using music to help parents find a way in to help their children. We get the story tonight from NBC's Rehema Ellis.

REHEMA ELLIS, reporting:
Here at baby times, it seems like a natural thing. But for these families, the hugs and the smiles didn't come so naturally. The children are developmentally delayed. And most, like 18 month-old Tyrael, are also visually impaired.

ERICA WHITE (Tyrael's Mother): And you're told by the doctor that your child will never be normal, he will never walk, he will never talk, he will never do anything that normal kids can do, you-- you become a little down. So it-- it gives me hope to come here.

ELLIS: Hope, because of what's happening in the Wake Up and Sing music therapy class. You might say Jacqueline Howard is the maestro.

(Jacqueline Howard and Erica White singing)

ELLIS: These classes work to activate the senses.

JACQUELINE HOWARD: That's the biggest thing is--learning to touch because your hands are going to help you see.

ELLIS: The sounds of music help parents connect with their babies, learning how to strengthen their bodies by helping them move. Six months ago, Gavin, who is almost two, was nearly motionless. Not anymore.

ALEXA BURTLEY (Gavin's Mother): He's playing with the drums. He's touching more. He's just more social.

ELLIS: For others, even a simple hug is a milestone. Thank you, Tyrael.

WHITE: Uh-oh, oh. (LAUGHING)

HOWARD: He was born one month before--

ELLIS: A professor of music at Morehouse College, Howard's motivation is personal. Her study of music's impact on the brain was prompted by her late sister who suffered uncontrollable seizures.
HOWARD: I wanted to grow up to-- to become a music doctor. And I knew I wanted to use music to help people.
ELLIS: How long can you keep doing that with the children at the center?
HOWARD: You know, until I take my last breath. I hope that's what I'll be doing.
ELLIS: Using music to strengthen children's bodies and family times. Rehema Ellis, NBC News, Atlanta.