Tinnitus, Hyperacusis and Sound Therapy

What is tinnitus (ringing in the ears)?
Tinnitus is the condition where a phantom noise is heard inside the head. It may be continuous or intermittent, loud or soft. The sound can be anything from ringing to buzzing, hissing, rustling or roaring.

What causes it?
Tinnitus can be caused by noise damage, head injury, infections, viruses or certain medications. Compounding factors include stress, fluid or wax blockage in the ear, and jaw or neck tension. Tinnitus is thought to begin in the inner ear, but the noise is then perpetuated by the brain.

Physical causes of tinnitus include:
• Damage to the sensory cells in the inner ear
• Hyperactive brain pathways

How Sound Therapy may help
Sound Therapy uses music that has been filtered through a number of processes designed to stimulate the ears and remap auditory pathways in the brain. New research on brain plasticity indicates that building new neural pathways for sound can sometimes reduce or eliminate the tinnitus response. (Nelson, 2008.)

In addition, Sound Therapy provides a specific stimulus to the muscles and sensory cells in the ear. This may improve signals sent to the brain, thus helping help build a more accurate auditory map and reduce the tinnitus.

Hyperacusis (sound sensitivity)
Sound sensitivity may exist with tinnitus or separate from tinnitus. A person may be sensitive to certain sounds or to loud sound generally. Sound Therapy may help to reduce hyperacusis by restoring the ability of the auditory system to moderate the volume of sounds that reach the brain.

Sound Therapy may help tinnitus and hyperacusis in these ways:
• Partial masking to reduce the awareness of the tinnitus
• Rehabilitation of the ear, improving the ability of the brain to receive sound accurately
• Remapping brain pathways and reducing hyperactive neural firing
• Reduction of tinnitus sound, and or reduced perception of the loudness of the sound
• Improved sleep and reduced stress
• Improved energy levels and ability to communicate, making it easier to ignore the tinnitus and participate in social activities.

Clinical support for Sound Therapy
Eric Jordan, M.I.S.T., Chief Audiometrician, Audiology Department, Royal Albert Edward Infirmary, Wigan England, conducted double blind tests with Sound Therapy over a two year period. He reported a high degree of success with tinnitus patients. He wrote: “What happens with Sound Therapy and tinnitus, as far as I can surmise, is that it re-vitalises the brain cells which have been the cause of brain cell hyperactivity. Such hyperactivity is caused by stress, anxiety and depression. Sound Therapy has succeeded where Tinnitus Maskers have failed because it has a soothing effect on the body as a whole, calms the mind and revitalizes the rundown brain cells.”

Sound Therapy is also thought to restructure links between various brain centers, helping to break the association between tinnitus and stress.

For more information refer to the book Triumph Over Tinnitus by Rafaele Joudry.