

Therapy Chat Episode 322



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[00:00:00] **Laura Reagan:** Therapy Chat podcast, episode 322.

[00:00:04] **Announcer:** This is the Therapy Chat Podcast with Laura Reagan LCSW-C. The information shared in this podcast is not a substitute for seeking help from a licensed mental health professional. And now here's your host, Laura Reagan LCSW-C.

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[00:01:16] **Laura Reagan:** And now for all you prescribers out there, Therapy Notes is proudly introducing e-prescribe use coupon code chat, or click the link in the show notes to get two free months at therapynotes.com.

[00:01:30] **Laura Reagan:** Hi, welcome back to Therapy Chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan. And today I'm very pleased to be interviewing a returning guest Maya Benattar. Maya's first time on Therapy Chat was back in 2017 in episode 96, and she's a music therapist. So if you listen to episode 96, you can learn a bit more about what music therapy is.

[00:01:53] **Laura Reagan:** This week, we are talking about rhythm and how she, as a music therapist uses rhythm in her practice and how rhythm can be helpful with healing trauma. So to give you a little bit more of Maya's background, Maya Benattar M A, MTBC, LCAT. She has a lot of letters cause she's a board certified music therapist, which is a national credential.

[00:02:17] **Laura Reagan:** And then her LCA T is her New York credential. She's a music therapist and psychotherapist in private practice in Midtown Manhattan and online throughout New York state, her specialties include anxiety, developmental and intergenerational trauma and highly sensitive. In addition to her clinical work, Maya offers supervision and consultation for other therapists provides professional development and wellness workshops and offers restorative workshops for helpers and healers.

[00:02:44] **Laura Reagan:** Maya received her master's degree from NYU and has completed extensive post-graduate training in vocal psychotherapy, creative arts therapies, and trauma treatment and music and imagery. You can learn more about Maya at her website, Mayabenattar.com, which I'll link to in the show notes. So I hope you will enjoy this fascinating conversation about rhythm and how rhythm can be used in music therapy.

[00:03:10] **Laura Reagan:** I thought it was a very interesting conversation. So let's dive right in.

[00:03:18] **Laura Reagan:** Hi, welcome back to Therapy Chat. I'm your host, Laura Reagan. And today I'm so happy to have a returning guest. Maya Benattar, LCAT MTBC. Maya. Thanks so much for coming back to therapy chat today.

[00:03:33] **Maya Benattar:** Thanks so much for having me.

[00:03:34] **Laura Reagan:** Yes, it's my pleasure. And I'm, I'm so interested in your work as a music therapist.

[00:03:40] **Laura Reagan:** It's it's like I love music and yet I don't really know that much about music therapy, even after talking with you before I still, in my mind, it's just more mysterious than, um, the other disciplines that I'm more familiar with. So I'm really excited to talk with you today about rhythm and yeah, yeah.

[00:03:59] **Maya Benattar:** Yeah. When we were chatting before we were saying how, how much rhythm shows up in everything, right. Like really global sense of rhythm, not only as an aspect of music, but rhythm as the rhythms of our body, our internal rhythms I'll often call them. So there's rhythm in how we breathe, how we talk, how we move the way our, you know, our blood moves through our, through our body, all the internal functions, but also rhythm is in really in everything, right?

[00:04:29] **Maya Benattar:** And schedules and rituals and routines and how we interact or don't with people and relationships rhythm just shows up everywhere.

[00:04:37] **Maya Benattar:** It is everywhere.

[00:04:38] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. And we don't really think about that. I think so before we start really talking about rhythm, let's just start off by you telling our audience a little bit more about who you are and what you do.

[00:04:49] **Maya Benattar:** Sure.

[00:04:50] **Maya Benattar:** So I am a music therapist and psychotherapist in New York city. And I work online throughout New York state. And my private practice focuses mainly on working with women who are highly sensitive, HSPs have anxiety and or experiences of childhood or intergenerational trauma.

[00:05:09] **Laura Reagan:** Wonderful. And so can you maybe start off by just giving people like a snapshot of what music therapy is?

[00:05:18] **Laura Reagan:** I know it's like just a snapshot about your whole profession,

[00:05:25] **Maya Benattar:** Million dollar question, right?

[00:05:27] **Laura Reagan:** just to set the context for people a little bit.

[00:05:29] **Maya Benattar:** Totally. So I, music therapy is a really a large and a diverse field and I work in just one tiny snippet of it. So just, but to quickly say music therapists work with everyone from mothers who are pregnant and giving birth and babies in the NICU to people who are on hospice.

[00:05:47] **Maya Benattar:** Um, and people who are actively dying and then families, once their loved ones have passed and everything in between. So music therapists work in hospitals and special needs schools and private practices, all different, all different kinds of settings on all different kinds of goals. So again, like the work that I do is mainly focused on trauma for the most part.

[00:06:08] **Maya Benattar:** And there are music therapists who work with kids on the spectrum with people who are going through neuro rehab, people who are, you know, in psych hospitals, all different kinds of places. So hard for me. I hope that it gives like kind of a global overview, hard for me to speak to simply about the entire field.

[00:06:25] **Maya Benattar:** All, all at once the American music therapy association website is a really good resource, just for general information on the field and that's, um, musictherapy.org. It goes into a lot more detail than I can even remember, um, about all of the different sort of populations and areas that, that music therapists work in.

[00:06:45] **Maya Benattar:** Some of which are totally outside of my specialty. Like neuro rehab, really interesting work when music therapists work with people, you know, post stroke and stuff like that. And not at all in my wheelhouse to be honest. So it's a very diverse and interesting field, but essentially in a nutshell, if I can try to find a nutshell here, essentially, Using music in an intentional and goal oriented way to address needs in social, physical, spiritual, emotional, and academic areas.

[00:07:16] **Maya Benattar:** And so that can be so many things.

[00:07:18] **Laura Reagan:** Oh yeah. Yeah. Every time I talk with you, my mind gets really fired up and just all these ideas start coming to mind, I'm gonna try to stay focused. Um, so you mentioned that you work with trauma and intergenerational trauma, as well as highly sensitive people, um, which there could be a lot of overlap to those populations.

[00:07:43] **Laura Reagan:** And, um, as you know, trauma's my specialty as well. So how do you use music and maybe more specifically rhythm in working with. Your clients, how can it be a factor?

[00:07:58] **Maya Benattar:** Yeah, definitely. So I think, let me think of the easiest, sort of the most succinct way to get into this when and I'll focus mostly on trauma, though, of course, there's a lot of overlap between trauma and HSP and trauma and anxiety as no, but when someone has experienced trauma, um, particularly childhood trauma, so something that happened early in life or, um, or intergenerational trauma, something that happened before they were born, it can show up in sort of disrupted rhythm. So sometimes that can look like, uh, a lack of connection to themselves feeling really disconnected, not really understanding their feelings, having been judged for criticized or punished for feelings.

[00:08:42] **Maya Benattar:** It can show up in so many different ways. Right? So, so music, the way that I work is there's a couple of things that will happen, right? The music doesn't just get used or like applied in one kind of preset way. I do tend to work in, in a. Psychodynamics sort of framework in general in that what happened?

[00:09:03] **Maya Benattar:** The stories of what happened before the present moment and patterns, um, within a family system and all of that are really important. So not just focusing on like applying this one thing and, you know, tracking the outcome kind of deal.

[00:09:17] **Laura Reagan:** No, it's just like, I feel anxious and you're like, okay, listen to this music and then you'll feel better.

[00:09:21] **Maya Benattar:** Right. And you know what, a hundred percent. And I think that sometimes people will want that. And I say that like, there's no way for me to know exactly what kind of music will help your anxiety. Right. Because, and I think, you know, there's a lot of resources out there these days of like playlist for anxiety and playlist for sleep.

[00:09:41] **Maya Benattar:** And I'm certainly, those are good place to start. If you have like, no idea where to start. Absolutely start there, but we are complex beings. And, and the music that helps some, one person sued their anxiety is not going to be the music that works for another person. And it will probably even change day to day and actually like a quick, a quick story of my own experience to illustrate that if that's okay.

[00:10:05] **Maya Benattar:** Sure. And I write, I wrote about this in a blog post a few years ago. So I often will hear from clients while I've tried listening to particularly classical music comes up a lot around anxiety and it didn't work years ago, a clients saying, you know, I listened to the Spotify peaceful piano station and that just made me more anxious.

[00:10:23] **Maya Benattar:** So of course I had to go and listen to this Spotify channel and it's really lovely piano music, kind of like the kind of stuff you'd hear in a spa. But if I could see what this client meant about, it didn't really touch their anxiety, those habits of, or those expectations of like Mozart's music should do this or piano music should do this.

[00:10:43] **Maya Benattar:** And if, if I don't respond in that way, it means that, you know, I'm broken or I suck or whatever it might be. Um, and so I had an experience myself, a few years ago, I was driving. I had just gotten off an upsetting phone call and I can notice my own anxiety, you know, I'm able to track that and just sort of notice.

[00:10:58] **Maya Benattar:** And so I put on the local in New York city at WQXR, the classical music station, which I love, I love classical music, grew up listening to it. And after a few minutes, I was like, yeah, this is, I can remember the piece was it might've actually been making the anxiety worse. Right. And so I'm just flipping through.

[00:11:15] **Maya Benattar:** I'm like, okay, this isn't going to work. And rather than try to like, you know, persevere and, you know, push through and make it work with like, I'm just going to experiment, like why not? And I'm flipping through different presets and I come upon. And of course now I can't remember the name of the song. It was a SIA song song by SIA.

[00:11:30] **Maya Benattar:** And that really, that really worked in that moment. And I remember like turning it up and turning up the bass. It has a very strong base, this particular song. I wish I could remember the name of it, but. If, you know, if you knows SIA's music, like it, it has texture and layers to it, and it has this forward momentum for the most part.

[00:11:48] **Maya Benattar:** And that really connected for me. I could feel the bass in my chest. I could, I could find my breath after a few minutes, the, the sort of the anxious flutter in my chest sort of settled and that worked for me. And that moment on that day, in a way that Costco music just was not working, was not helping.

[00:12:07] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. And even just, as you say, like classical music, I mean, there's so many different types of classical music and then piano music. There's so many, you know, there's Scott Joplin and then there's like Vivaldi and there's Beethoven and you know, it's a total. And then there's, you know, all of Mozart's music, wasn't the same.

[00:12:27] **Laura Reagan:** And you know, obviously, so some things are gonna be fast and some things are going to be dramatic and some things are. Sad and slow and

[00:12:36] **Maya Benattar:** Totally. Yeah. I mean, lumping, you know, classical music all under the same umbrella, like does Costco music and ourselves, both a disservice. And now that I think about it, that SIA song might've been the chandelier one.

[00:12:47] **Maya Benattar:** Can't remember that's going to bug me, but whatever the rhythm of that song, if we just go back to rhythm for a sec, the rhythm of that song was really consistent and present like a really nice strong pulse. And when we're feeling anxious, Generally we lose that, that internal pulse, right? Thinking about like internal rhythms and how those feel.

[00:13:08] **Maya Benattar:** We lose that because when we feel anxious, we get pulled sort of out of our window of tolerance, out of that space where everything feels consistent and grounded enough. And we get pulled into like hyper arousal, right. Where there's just kind of that heightened energy. And I'm making like this like back and forth movement with my hand where everything just can get a little fluttery or tight or anxious.

[00:13:29] **Maya Benattar:** And so what I needed in that moment, and this really wasn't a conscious thought of, I'm going to find a piece of music with a good rhythm to it. But what was helpful after I reflected on it was that really consistent grounding base and that consistent rhythm, because we need something that reminds us of that when we've moved away from it, as we inevitably will do, because I don't know a single person who can stay calm all the time, self included.

[00:13:54] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. I mean, we're not really meant to our emotions are there to cue to us that we're feeling something.

[00:14:00] **Maya Benattar:** Right. Exactly. Yes. We're not meant to. And it's amazing how often I say that to clients we're not, and it gives them such permission of like, we are not meant to be calm and ground and peaceful all the time.

[00:14:12] **Maya Benattar:** That's not what our emotions are meant for. It's not what our nervous system is designed for. Right? Like we need to know when, when something, when we might be in danger or when we might be checked out, the problem is, is when we get stuck in those spaces. Right?

[00:14:27] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Well that even hearing your example about SIA and it made me think about it, another of her songs, I feel like, I think we actually talked about this in our previous interview, but you know, which is okay, but the, you know, that song Elastic Heart that has this really interesting rhythm, it's like this that the, you know, in the background and then there's something going like more steady.

[00:14:52] **Laura Reagan:** So it reminds me almost of like, if you look at an old fashioned clock, the inner workings of the clock and the different gears moving the way that song is. So does our body rhythm match the, the, like with that pulsing base that you mentioned does, does that like, does your heart rate like cue to it and match it up to slow down or something fast?

[00:15:17] **Laura Reagan:** If I'm anxious? I feel more anxious.

[00:15:19] **Maya Benattar:** Yeah. I mean, our, our internal rhythms are the way we're breathing. Our heartbeat will absolutely like, kind of be in flux with what what's around us, including music. Right. Will it match it exactly now? Probably not. It really depends, but yeah, like we're able to be influenced by music in that way, which I think is helpful when we're aware of it.

[00:15:41] **Maya Benattar:** Um, but we're also, you know, so many other things, not just music influence our rhythms, right? So like the noticing, even just the noticing of like, what, what am I noticing when my feeling in my body I'll sometimes ask the client to like draw their, their internal experience or to play it. And so that awareness of, oh, you know, if they play something really fast and like, oh, I'm actually really anxious right now.

[00:16:03] **Maya Benattar:** I didn't think I was anxious or, you know, someone comes in talking, talking really fast. But then when I asked them to play their internal experience and it's really slow, we can feel more than one thing at a time. Right. Like we are complex. We are so complex in that way. And so, and that's often, you know, a big piece of the work, I think for people in general and also in trauma work is being able to feel two things, right.

[00:16:26] **Maya Benattar:** That we are not like these black and white robots of like, I either feel happy or I feel sad or I feel angry or whatever it is, but the complexity of like, I can be excited and also a little scared, or I can be, you know, joyful and a little sad, right? Like kind of holding those and music really kind of hold those, those dualities.

[00:16:47] **Maya Benattar:** Those complexities in a way that sometimes our words really fall short.

[00:16:52] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. All right. So you, you and I were talking when, before we started about how music is it can, and rhythm can serve a purpose of resourcing and other purposes. I didn't write down what I said or what you said. So would you like to talk a little bit about that music as resourcing?

[00:17:15] **Laura Reagan:** Is that really what we were just talking about?

[00:17:18] **Maya Benattar:** I think in some ways, yeah, that is, that is what we were talking about, but I'm happy to, to keep, to keep talking about it because I think, you know, a lot of my clients come in saying they have a relationship to music. Often what draws people to, to music therapy in my experience is, is a couple of things.

[00:17:34] **Maya Benattar:** One of which is how I really love music. And wouldn't it be neat if I could explore healing my trauma or my anxiety or whatever it is in, in a way that connects me to something that I really enjoy. And so music as a resource is really important. And when we're working, when I'm working with, with someone who has a history of trauma, I want to make sure that their resource, I think any trauma therapist who, you know, who does this work wants to make sure their clients are resource, you know, the analogy, the example of, you know, you don't go hiking up a mountain without a flashlight, right?

[00:18:07] **Maya Benattar:** Like we don't just kind of wander off into the darkness, the wilderness without. Something to see by, without something to

hold on to, they got mixed about three metaphors they're trauma therapy, but whatever. Um, and so sometimes a really a really important and, and foundational piece of the work is resourcing.

[00:18:26] **Maya Benattar:** And that's not, it's not always music. Like I will ask clients, you know, can you connect to your body? Can you hold your body in a way that feels soothing right now? They may have never had that experience, right? Like things like butterfly hugs and feet on the ground and breasts and, you know, turning side to side, like all of this sematic simple somatic stuff, that's actually really meaningful.

[00:18:49] **Maya Benattar:** And then using music as a resource is helping is a way to help people build that capacity to, I can feel calm enough, grounded enough emphasis on enough, because we're never perfect. But I can feel calm. I have a way back into the calm feeling. I don't just have to wait for it to like float down from the sky and I, you know, once every other month or whatever, but like I have a way back in which really helps people feel a sense of agency and a sense of control, healthy control of, I can, I can move this flexibility and fluidity around my feelings and around the way that I show up.

[00:19:26] **Maya Benattar:** And so sometimes with clients. Figuring out, like, let's say they want to feel more connected to feeling grounded, which is often a big one in my work. And so we might get curious how, like, what does it feel like when, when you're grounded? What does that, and not just the thoughts of like, I, you know, when I'm grounded, I think about X, Y, and Z.

[00:19:43] **Maya Benattar:** That's important. I'm not saying it's not, but like, what does it actually feel like in your body sometimes I'll pull up like, uh, emotion sensation, wheel, that kind of thing. Just to have more of the language of like, what does it really feel like in your body? Oh, you know, it feels like I can feel my feet on the floor.

[00:19:59] **Maya Benattar:** I feel a warmth in my chest. I feel my spine as long or whatever it is. I'm just sort of freewheeling here, but, and when, sometimes we might need to go back to when was the last time or a time that you felt grounded and I don't personally care if it was five minutes ago or five years ago, but really dropping into that memory and really just valuing that experience.

[00:20:19] **Maya Benattar:** Really, really valuing that, that experience of feeling okay. Uh, feeling grounded, a feeling calm again, whatever that that resource feeling is, and then finding a piece of music that connects. So again, like we were saying before, that's much less about sort of prescriptive, oh, it's

gotta be classical or, oh, it's gotta be jazz or, and actually digging down to like the elements of the music.

[00:20:41] **Maya Benattar:** So if I offer, sometimes I'll offer people options because, you know, inevitably, if, if I say, can you find a piece of music that, you know, there were, that connects you to calmness? That's a hard question. And sometimes that's a hard question for me to answer even given the work that I do. And so I give options and I have certain pools of music that I will offer from.

[00:20:59] **Maya Benattar:** And I'll ask people to get really specific of like, you know, what are the elements. Piece that that connect you to grounding. Oh, it was the cello, you know, something about the richness and the warmth of the cello, or, you know, oh, the guitar was too fast and that actually makes me feel a little anxious. I would like guitar, but I would like it to be a little slower.

[00:21:18] **Maya Benattar:** Like we can really get so intentional about it. And then often we will do music and imagery in that supportive fashion. So staying with a piece of music, let's say we found one at sometimes that's, that's a process in and of itself, right? The process of being able to say no to something. And perhaps they've never had that experience of being able to say no in a safe way that no is accepted and understood.

[00:21:42] **Maya Benattar:** And so when we find a piece of music that connects them to that resource feeling and feeling that they want more of, and we stay with it, um, the music will repeat and I will guide them into just noticing what the music is offering you, and then noticing any images or sensations that come and letting those show up on a piece of paper.

[00:22:01] **Maya Benattar:** And this is not about drawing anything in particular. It can just be colors and shapes. But it's about deepening that experience and valuing the experience of, I can feel good in my body. I can feel calm. I can feel whatever it might be, and I can stay with that. Right. Because so often it can be really fleeting and we want to connect together.

[00:22:21] **Maya Benattar:** Those moments. Of it feels, it feels more and more possible. Right? So going back to the window of tolerance of like widening the window, widening that space, where we can feel in our window, in our optimal kind of zone of arousal to be, to be with that feeling.

[00:22:39] **Laura Reagan:** As you're telling me that I'm thinking about rhythm and how, how does rhythm play a part in that?

[00:22:46] **Laura Reagan:** So if you're talking about like that, I think you called it visual imagery or something you were talking about like a guided meditation or a guided visualization.

[00:22:59] **Maya Benattar:** Not it's not exactly. So certainly I do some, some guided visualization sometimes around things like a calm place, a peaceful place, things like that.

[00:23:09] **Maya Benattar:** The music and imagery process is allowing is more around allowing the client to develop the imagery themselves. Rather than me saying, I want you to imagine, you know, you're in a forest walking through a forest. Yeah. Like, and sometimes I'll do something like that and that's incredibly valuable, but this is this process of staying with a piece of music and allowing internal imagery to come up.

[00:23:33] **Maya Benattar:** So really trusting that there is the capacity in them as is in all of us to, to have that rich inner world of, I can really stay with this feeling and the music can gray me images. Um, it can be really simple. It can be, I heard this piece of music and I was imagining I was, you know, standing next to a tree and it was this beautiful pine tree.

[00:23:55] **Maya Benattar:** And, you know, music is evocative. It's meant to be evocative. So the music that we use for. Supportive music and imagery is meant to hold. It doesn't develop. Like, I wouldn't never say never, but I wouldn't generally use like Stravinsky's Firebird for something like this. Right? Because that has a lot of quick rhythmic changes in it.

[00:24:16] **Maya Benattar:** It has a lot of, um, dynamic changes. It's evocative, but not necessarily a vocative of resourced feelings, right. It might evoke sort of might've have many things, um, you know, might evoke anger or frustration or unknown in some way. But the, the elements of music for supportive music and imagery is the consistency is really important.

[00:24:38] **Maya Benattar:** So there will be like a consistent, generally speaking, a consistent rhythm. Um, it just whole. In a certain place. So once, once a client finds a piece, we want to stay there. We want to deepen that capacity to be in that feeling. And it might just be that as they're listening, they feel warm. Okay. You feel warm?

[00:24:58] **Maya Benattar:** What color would warm, warmth be? Right. What shape might it shape my to take on the page? So it's okay if they don't have like a whole story and, you know, fleshed out imagery of, you know, the forest or

whatever in their mind, but it's really just about deepening cause that's imagery too, right? To really land in your body and to have sensation and color and texture where previously that, that may not have been trauma can keep us so much in our heads and so much in that sort of black or white space.

[00:25:26] **Maya Benattar:** And so this is about not to be too hokey, but it's about like adding the color, the color and texture of different ways. Uh, feeling and how helping that be really safe and possible and approachable.

[00:25:39] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. I think, I think I'm hearing my mind wants to make this in what I understand. So I think what I'm hearing is like that if we're in like a pattern of kind of almost.

[00:25:54] **Laura Reagan:** Uh, rut of something, not to say the person is in a rut in their life, but like there's a worn path that's familiar. And we're kind of in that, whether it's an anxiety loop or a spiral of depression or whatever, and then this music and imagery processes about sort of opening. Uh, the field of like sensation, you know, imagery.

[00:26:19] **Maya Benattar:** So like we want to get on a different path. I think they get the visual of a path is helpful. Right. Because so often, um, and I'm sure you would probably agree with this. Like when someone starts therapy, they're stuck in a pattern that they don't. Or that it's really uncomfortable, whatever that might be.

[00:26:36] **Maya Benattar:** Right. And so that can be, you know, anxiety loops, um, you know, fights with their spouse, right. And it just, the pattern just repeats. There's like this loop that's happening. And so people come to therapy because they want to change because at its core, right, like therapy at its core is, is change oriented.

[00:26:52] **Maya Benattar:** And, and we need to both understand the pattern that's happening, right. To really like unpack that and understand it. It's really hard in my experience to, to understand it. If you're still in it, if you don't have the capacity to kind of move out of it and kind of see it from a distance. So certainly a lot of the work and I can talk about this.

[00:27:12] **Maya Benattar:** A lot of the work that I do is in looking at the distressing, you know, tension filled memories or patterns or relationships that someone might have in their life, but also about helping them feel different because we want that as well. And we can go back and forth between feeling resourced and feeling calm and grounded.

[00:27:33] **Maya Benattar:** Because when you're looking at the difficult stuff, quote, unquote stuff, we go back and forth right between. Okay. Like I can feel I can, you know, pack that backpack of, of resources and, and get my flashlight and make sure it's got batteries. And, and that's the doing the work to feel, to feel calm or to feel more grounded in my experience.

[00:27:54] **Maya Benattar:** Otherwise, it's really easy for people to stay in the. And to just, even in a therapy session, I will often pause people and say like, you know, we're kind of going around the same theme. We're kind of talking around the same theme and I'm not sure how helpful that is. I say that in probably hopefully kinder ways than that, but, but you know, sometimes I am that Fort right.

[00:28:15] **Maya Benattar:** Of like, let's try something different. Right. What, and sometimes that's, so that's so challenging to, to feel different. There's some is challenging, right? Like even if someone doesn't like the pattern that they end up, they're in, it's familiar. Right. And are, we are wired to like familiarity, even if it's uncomfortable.

[00:28:35] **Maya Benattar:** Right. And so the idea of, yeah, the fear of the unknown, the idea of feeling something outside of the familiar, the known is can be really challenging. Right. So as much as it, it can feel like, of course, like listen to music that connects you to positive feelings. It can be really challenging for people.

[00:28:54] **Maya Benattar:** What if they've never had. Experiences of feeling calm or grounded. What if, you know, as a child, when they felt calm, that was when something bad might happen or they never let themselves feel calm because they were always kind of waiting and watching for something to happen. Um, and so it's sort of in always in that state of being fearful and they've held on to that, right?

[00:29:14] **Maya Benattar:** The body remembers all of that and holds on to that. And so being able to, to be resourced, to have that happen in relationship with me, right. Which is a really important part of any kind of therapy, but particularly in the way that I work, like being able to receive that from someone to be, to have that rhythm of like the give and take of like, okay, we're going to slow down around this.

[00:29:33] **Maya Benattar:** I really value that you don't feel comfortable a lot of the time that you don't feel safe. And I want to help you experience that

because that's really important. That's really, that's a really big piece of the work. Yeah.

[00:29:45] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. That's really fascinating and very thought provoking for me. So one thing you were saying.

[00:29:52] **Laura Reagan:** You do a lot of is you mentioned the words reclaiming rhythm. Can you tell us more about that?

[00:29:59] **Maya Benattar:** Yeah. So the phrase reclaim your rhythm came out of some workshops that I had done a few years back, and then it sort of dawned on me that that in essence is a lot of the work that I do. So the idea of reclaiming is that we take back something or that we claim it for the first time, really in sort of a bold way or in a gentle way.

[00:30:21] **Maya Benattar:** Both of which I think are really important in therapy and rhythm can be so much, it can be like we're saying it can be our own internal rhythm of how we feel, how we express ourselves, how we hold boundaries. And it can also be the rhythm of any sort of relational space. So what happens between between partners, between parent and child, between coworkers, there's a rhythm to really any sort of interaction it's not always a comfortable or enjoyable rhythm, right?

[00:30:53] **Maya Benattar:** Sometimes there's friction and in these rhythm and rhythmic exchanges, really, sometimes there's an absence of response. Right? Think about a kid who's trying to get something, a response from a parent and the parent is just not connected, right? So that's, there's rhythm in all of in relationship, really relationship is, and rhythm are interchangeable in the way that I think about it.

[00:31:13] **Maya Benattar:** So helping someone reclaim them, reclaim the rhythm rather is figuring out what, what they want to change and holding that under this, this sort of umbrella of everything we do in the way that I work, everything that we do, everything we are is rhythm and also the way that we can process. Well, we want to change is not just through words because so much of what happens to us happens in our bodies, happens in our implicit memory, happens in the stories of those who've come before us.

[00:31:43] **Maya Benattar:** And so if we want to really effect lasting change, I keep making this motion like down my body from my head, it has to move downward. It can't just be a cognitive process as valuable as that is, we need to be able to feel different and to sustain those different feelings.

[00:31:59] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. And I just think about how I can remember a certain time when I worked in a very difficult job and I was close to burnout or maybe.

[00:32:11] **Laura Reagan:** Burned out. But I remember I tried to go to Zumba to let off some stress and I, I couldn't move my shoulders and I couldn't move my hips, you know? So it was like, there's a way that you move your body. Like when you walk, when you step, when you dance, that is rhythmic, you know, and it has a predictable rhythm, but when you're so tense up, I was like, this is how I know that I'm really, this job is really stressing me out because I feel like my shoulders are up by my ears and I can't make them come down.

[00:32:43] **Laura Reagan:** And I can't shimmy to say my life and because they just won't move. It's like, relax. It's like rigid.

[00:32:55] **Laura Reagan:** Running a group. Private practice has been a challenging and rewarding experience. And one thing that has made it so much easier is Therapy Notes. Therapy Notes makes billing, scheduling, note taking. And tele-health incredibly easy. If you're coming from another EHR, like I did, Therapy Notes makes the transition incredibly easy.

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[00:33:59] **Maya Benattar:** Yeah, I mean, and that that's such a great description and that happens, you know, that happens in our bodies and it happens in the patterns in our lives. Right. And so not only is it about figuring out ways to feel differently, but then, like I was saying before, really just unpacking the why, like, what is it that's happening that is causing that, that tension, that the lack of, you know, to go with your, about your shoulders and hips, the lack of fluidity, flexibility, mobility, and all of those words can be used in the context of our feelings and our relationships, right?

[00:34:35] **Maya Benattar:** Like why. Looped into, you know, I'm always anxious. And so for example, and so like also part of the work that I do is looking at the, the difficult stuff and not just talking about it. I think I do often talk with clients. I think there's a lot of value to our words and to making meaning we need to make meaning of what's happening internally.

[00:34:56] **Maya Benattar:** Otherwise it just stays internal, but being able to express. Through music, what we may not have words for or what feels more, more approachable to express it in that sense was backwards. It might feel easier to do express it in music. So sometimes I'll, I'll have clients that say, well, I can find a, a song for it, but I don't actually know what the words are.

[00:35:19] **Maya Benattar:** And it's not for lack of capacity to speak on their part. It's that it's that some of this really runs quite deep. Right? I mean, otherwise, why would there be centuries of musicians and artists and, you know, dancers and all of this? Like, this is a way that we communicate. Creativity is a way that we communicate just inherently as humans, which has reminded me of the book, the world in six songs, the Daniel Levitan book, which is a really, I think, encapsulates in a much more succinct way.

[00:35:48] **Maya Benattar:** Some of what I've been saying about that, we need different kinds of songs serve different purposes. Essentially. It goes through what he categorizes as the six different types of songs and the roles that they've played in human behavior and culture as it's been shaped. It's really interesting book. And so I'll often just go back to what I was saying.

[00:36:05] **Maya Benattar:** I'll often really work with clients around unpacking the tightness, unpacking the stuck places, unpacking the why is it? Every time I talk to my sister, I end up crying or whatever it might be. And so we want to not. Talk about those, but to have a different relationship to the tiers, for example, in that made up example of the tiers of the sister.

[00:36:29] **Maya Benattar:** And so I'll ask people to, okay, let's find a piece of music that connects to the quality of the tears. The tears are really important and you've tried talking about it and you're just in the same loop of you talk to your sister, you cry. And so we'll really slow down, which is such an important part of, of Trauma Therapy.

[00:36:47] **Maya Benattar:** The really the deep slowing down of let's, you know, I might ask someone, can you draw you and your sister, can you, and that's a place for just externalizing the, you know, the relationship, right. Having it out. Out of the head out of the words, and then maybe it's, can you pick a song

or a sound to represent you and represent your sister and then maybe one to represent the two of you together, whereas the give and take, where is the disconnect?

[00:37:13] **Maya Benattar:** Right? Is it a, I get a lot of information and they often get a lot of information just from that slowing down and unpacking of, oh, you know, I'm making up this example as I go along. So I am this really slow, you know, cello piece. And my sister is a SIA song that just popped in my mind. And so we're operating on these different levels and it's really hard for me to, to be around her energy.

[00:37:40] **Maya Benattar:** It's really hard for me to feel some separation between us. I feel like she encroaches on the, or there's a lot of metaphor and even choosing instruments to represent people, choosing instruments, to represent ourselves. And then, so that's a way to explore it. Also, we might use our voice. To represent to explore, not just with words.

[00:38:01] **Maya Benattar:** So using vocal sounds to explore friction, to explore closeness tension, and I'll do this with clients. So this is what I'm talking about now is vocal psychotherapy, which is an intensive post-grad training that I did with Dr. Diane Austin, who is she created, developed and created this method, which is really based around using the voice as a way to heal mostly developmental trauma.

[00:38:26] **Maya Benattar:** Right? So our voice is the first way that we communicate. And ideally we have an attuned parent or caregiver who responds right. Thinking about like motherese and when babies make sounds, and if we don't have that, it interrupts something sort of fundamental internally. So using sometimes really simple vocal sounds to feel heard and seen and held and what that does to the psyche, to the nervous system, to feel really held, to have that reparative experience of, you know, perhaps me singing in harmony with them or me singing like a low tone underneath their voice to really feel that sense of, oh, I'm being held like literally held it can be, wow, it'd be really reparative in addition to what she calls free associative singing, which is where, which is essentially it's from it's free association, but using, using the.

[00:39:19] **Maya Benattar:** So choosing two different chords just to, so we have that back and forth rocking sensation, right. It's a really simple, and then we might sing as a feeling to a feeling or about a feeling. So I've had clients choose to, I want to sing to my anxiety. I want to ask it what the hell it's doing? What does it want?

[00:39:39] **Maya Benattar:** It's a little bit of parts work, really, but, but in, but in this context of, of music, sometimes they'll want to sing as the anxiety, right? Like singing. This is, and. Getting into the creative process in that way can really bring a lot of really interesting insight into, wow. I didn't think I was going to, I was going to sing that or damn my anxiety really wants me to be careful because of X, Y, and Z or whatever it might be.

[00:40:04] **Maya Benattar:** So it's really a way to get into the body. And when we sing, we're inherently just so connected. Ideally, we're so connected to our bodies, to our breath, to rhythm. Right. And so it allows for a different experience of these repetitive patterns and these feelings.

[00:40:19] **Laura Reagan:** Oh, that is so fascinating. And I'm just like, I'm thinking of silly things, but I'm thinking like, do you know what, if you, aren't a good singer, you want to be a music therapist and you wanted to do this like vocal therapy. Is that, do you, what if you're off key? Like, is that okay?

[00:40:39] **Maya Benattar:** So it's a great question. Do you mean if you want to be a music therapist or if you want to be a music therapy client?

[00:40:44] **Laura Reagan:** Well, I know for the client, I would think that they should not have to be good at singing. That seems, yeah, that just seems like that couldn't be needed. That wouldn't be right.

[00:40:55] **Maya Benattar:** Exactly. No, exactly. For, for clients, you don't, there is no need to have any experience with singing or instruments or anything like that.

[00:41:03] **Maya Benattar:** Some of my clients have played, have experienced with, you know, piano lessons or, you know, are singers, but just as many are not to become a music therapist. Yes. You need to, to be able to, to sing, to be able to pass proficiencies on guitar and piano. As well as if you had a main instrument other than those three.

[00:41:22] **Maya Benattar:** So like I have some friends who are music therapists, who, their main instrument, what they grew up playing and performing was like Viola or clarinet or something. But my main instrument is voice. So the vocal psychotherapy felt really well into my own wheelhouse, but yeah, like to be a music therapist, um, to do vocal psychotherapy needs to be able to sing ideally this thing.

[00:41:41] **Maya Benattar:** Well, to be able to hold that container for people, um, it doesn't mean you need to be, I don't know, Andrea Bocelli or something like we don't need to be sort of why that example came to mind. Don't need to be an opera singer. But to feel it's an instrument just like, right. And just like any tool you might use as a talk therapist needed to feel proficient and comfortable with it.

[00:42:03] **Maya Benattar:** So yeah, that, that is important.

[00:42:06] **Laura Reagan:** Wow. That's so interesting to me. Cause I'm when you said like maybe I'll sing in harmony with harmony with them. I thought, what if you're not accustomed singer like, cause you, so now I know you would need to be, to be able to do that anyway.

[00:42:21] **Maya Benattar:** Yeah. Definitely. To be able to do that, it doesn't need to be perfect.

[00:42:24] **Maya Benattar:** Like I think there are times when I will sing in this. With someone, because that really mirrors the, the frustration that they're experiencing. And I can give them more of that experience. But yeah, like I, I know how to do that. I, before I trained as a music therapist, I spent, gosh, um, I don't know, seven, eight, something like that years doing voice lessons and competitions and musicals and stuff.

[00:42:46] **Maya Benattar:** So I feel pretty comfortable with my voice, um, is not about me performing or, you know, showing off or anything. But the fact that I feel comfortable with it means that I can use it as a tool really intentionally and in a really nuanced way. And that's everything from doing vocal psychotherapy exercises with clients, which can go very deep to teaching a client, you know, a really simple humming exercise, right.

[00:43:10] **Maya Benattar:** Which is more like polyvagal stuff of, you know, w why do you notice sensation when you Hom I'll do it with you? And I need to feel comfortable with that. And that stuff is, is much more, much more simple. And it, that maybe it matters a little less if you're on a particular pitch, but sometimes that can feel really soothing for people, right?

[00:43:28] **Maya Benattar:** Like to be able to feel, you know, as I exhale, I just let out a really gentle home, right. That it's, repatterning these, these experiences that a lot of times people have experienced trauma don't feel safe in their. And so to have these experiences of, I can feel safe in my body, I can feel, and then not only safe, but pleasure.

[00:43:48] **Maya Benattar:** I can have experiences of pleasure and joy and excitement, and that's ultimately what we want for our clients. And so music is, is a really, I think, natural way to do that because it's so often will connect us to that. It does also, and I think maybe a direction for us to speak to is that music also holds so much, so much space and possibility for holding feelings that, that are difficult.

[00:44:14] **Maya Benattar:** I don't, you know, I want to, if it's okay to speak a little bit to that, because something, I often hear a little less these days, but something I've often heard is, you know, oh, you must just make your clients so happy. Um, and I think that speaks so much to like a lot of people have had really positive experiences with music in their life.

[00:44:33] **Maya Benattar:** Like I said before, music means something to them, connects them to joy. Dance makes them smile. I am 150% for that is, but in the work that I do and the trauma work that I do, especially music also holds so much space for, for sadness. For grief, for loss, music can bring people to tears. It can hold them in their tears, right.

[00:44:55] **Maya Benattar:** Help them feel understood and held by the music. And that's a big part of this work that I do as well, that we need to build internal resources. We need to build the capacity for joy. I think that's something that Janina Fisher writes about a lot, right? The capacity for joy, not only in the world, but in the therapy session, that is so, so important, but we also need to be able to heal the stuckness and heal the patterns.

[00:45:22] **Maya Benattar:** And so often the way that I'll use music with clients is also around exploring the difficult places, finding a piece of music that holds them in the sadness. So we might do music and imagery. Called Rican. Oh my gosh. What is it called? Educative music and imagery. Goodness. And that is more about staying with something that feels difficult.

[00:45:45] **Maya Benattar:** So that might be a difficult feeling, memory, sensation, relationship, any of those? We choose one and sometimes it's really hard just to choose one, but we really winnow it down. Right. Just finding a small, small moment, a small thing. And then we find a piece of music that, that really holds them in that feeling.

[00:46:05] **Maya Benattar:** And that alone is hard, right? If you've been feeling sad for a long time, why on earth would you want to stay with the sadness? And I'll tell clients, the idea is not to, to keep you there forever, but we need to, if we want to move out of patterns, we need to understand what's happening. We need

to understand our relationship to it because that feeling as much as we may not like it is likely serving a purpose.

[00:46:26] **Maya Benattar:** Maybe it's serving a purpose for a younger part of ourselves. Maybe it's serving a purpose for, you know, it's serving some sort of a purpose, right. And we have some sort of a relationship to it. And sadness in particular sadness, anger are two big ones that are particularly tricky for people. And so being able to have a different relationship to it, right.

[00:46:48] **Maya Benattar:** Perhaps. A lot of clients for whom anger is really difficult, oftentimes because they were not allowed to be angry as kids, or they had experiences of other people's anger that were really overwhelming or terrifying or dangerous to them. And so being able to have an experience of anger, so finding a piece of music that connects to anger.

[00:47:09] **Maya Benattar:** And so now we're working with music. That's like a little less pleasant again, probably not Stravinsky's Firebird, but never say never, but music that's a little more evocative. It's got a little more friction tension to it. You know, a little I'm like rubbing my fingers together a little. Something, something that evokes and holds in that feeling of anger or anxiety, and then it's the staying with it so that we can learn about it and have build a different relationship to this difficult feeling.

[00:47:37] **Maya Benattar:** Because ultimately we want to ideally to have the capacity to feel angry without it being overwhelming, to feel sad without getting swept under for weeks and weeks and weeks, right. Having that breath of, of emotion is what makes us human. Right? It's not realistic to say I'm always going to be happy. We need to be able to feel these other feelings.

[00:47:59] **Maya Benattar:** And to understand them. And so music and imagery is a really lovely way to feel understood the music helps clients feel understood and held in that. And then they'll create as they listen an image that connects to that feeling that represents that, feeling their experience of it. Again, just connecting them to, I can feel this anger in my body, but I'm still here.

[00:48:22] **Maya Benattar:** I'm okay. Right. The music also in that it has a clear beginning and an ending it's a very safe container, right? So we're not just sort of endlessly talking about it or endlessly, you know, creating images about. But there's really safe container of, I can, wow. I can, I can feel this. I can stay with this for three minutes.

[00:48:40] **Maya Benattar:** I was okay. Right. To feel that like, wow, maybe I even like enjoyed it. It was a different experience of anger, um, to have to have a piece of music that really reflected that. And no one ever let me feel angry. I was in fact criticized for being angry and wow, this is different. And we always want to highlight and pay attention to what's different in this work.

[00:49:00] **Maya Benattar:** Right. Cause that's where the seeds for change. That sounds so hokey as well. But that's where the possibility for change really exists.

[00:49:07] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah, absolutely. So just out of curiosity, like what's an example of, of a song that might someone might use for anger. I just think that if I hear the song, what it is. It helps me conceptualize it differently.

[00:49:22] **Laura Reagan:** I mean, I know it's unique to the person, but I was just wondering if it's like Metallica

[00:49:27] **Maya Benattar:** or it can be, I mean, so again, like I will ask clients, like, is there something from your music that really connects you to anger and sometimes they've got something right? Like sometimes if it's Metallica sometimes.

[00:49:39] **Maya Benattar:** Oh, goodness. Yeah. I mean, Lincoln park, like sometimes often I will work with music that doesn't have words. So songs are incredibly valuable and I stand by everything I've said about songs thus far, but they add a whole nother layer with the lyrics. Yeah, right. And so sometimes we want to work with, with lyrics, right?

[00:49:58] **Maya Benattar:** Sometimes the value of like they're singing about me or to me, or for me is so powerful. Sometimes it's too much. Or sometimes there is a disconnect between the lyrics and what the music sounds like. So sometimes I'll work just often I'll work just with instrumental music. It kind of simplifies it a little bit and I will offer people options.

[00:50:19] **Maya Benattar:** So, so your question was like an example of a, a piece of music. Yeah.

[00:50:24] **Laura Reagan:** Or it could be like a T you know, a description of what music that might hold the anger could feel like, is it fast speed or is it a,

[00:50:34] **Maya Benattar:** if, you know, everyone's experience of anger is different. Right? So for someone I'm trying to find a, an answer, but also like a authentic answer.

[00:50:44] **Maya Benattar:** So for someone, their experience of anger might be like really fast and driving and persistent and relentless and kind of that like, and so then we find a piece of music that matches. A piece that comes to mind is, um, oh my gosh, what's it called? It's a piano piece called every day by Carly commando. I think that's it.

[00:51:02] **Maya Benattar:** And so it's just a sort of relentless, it's almost six minutes long. It's like piano piece that just kind of doesn't let us right. Persistence and energy to it. Right. It's just, um, if that matches someone's experience of anger, we use that, um, someone else's experience of anger might be like so uncomfortable in their bodies and kind of like grading and frictiony and oh, like one of those.

[00:51:26] **Maya Benattar:** And so maybe what might resonate in this. This is all with like giant maybes on it. There's a Kronos quartet piece called lullaby. Ironically, it sounds nothing like a lullaby and it kind of has that like kind of grading, like quarter tones stuff going on. I believe it's, um, based off of an Iranian Iranian folk song.

[00:51:50] **Maya Benattar:** And so, and it's, um, a string quartet and it has a lot of that kind of like quarter-tone so like kind of the notes between Western scale notes, if that makes sense. And, and that might more match anger for someone else. So I never presume to know. I always tell them, I don't assume I offer options. I always say I didn't compose any of these.

[00:52:11] **Maya Benattar:** I'm not going to be offended if you say no. Like I, and for some, then that's a big thing actually. Cause for a lot of people being able to say no, It's a big thing, right? It may not have been okay. It may not still not be okay. So to be able to get really

[00:52:24] **Maya Benattar:** intentional

[00:52:25] **Laura Reagan:** practicing boundaries.

[00:52:28] **Maya Benattar:** Yeah, absolutely practicing boundaries.

[00:52:30] **Maya Benattar:** We might spend 20 minutes on just like going through different, different options. I usually just put like a snippet, so it's not

like we listened to the whole thing, but being able to say no, have that be heard and, and held. And for that to be safe is absolutely practicing boundaries and also valuing themselves.

[00:52:46] **Maya Benattar:** Right, which is part of boundaries as well. Like this really matters. And I'm going to take the time to slow down and be curious about my feeling and be curious about what might match it. And they may not have had those experiences either of like, this feeling is important and I'm important and I am valuable.

[00:53:03] **Maya Benattar:** And so I'm going to really take my time.

[00:53:05] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. Yeah. As you're saying that I can just picture, like, if one is very anxious and uncomfortable with making a decision, which is common for trauma survivors who, you know, there was no, there was never a safe option. So it was like, you know, for so many of my clients and people, I know who've grown up in that kind of environment.

[00:53:24] **Laura Reagan:** It's like, you know, You know, you might, if you step this way, it's going to be bad. And if you step this way, it's going to be bad. So you just, it isn't safe to make a decision. So then you want to rush through just whichever one you'd like, or that one. Yeah, this is fine. This is fine. And you know, so to sit with the discomfort of that, even, and trust the therapeutic relationship and the process to be able to go, well, what do I like?

[00:53:50] **Laura Reagan:** I mean, that's, that could be months and months of work,

[00:53:52] **Maya Benattar:** I think right there. Of course. I mean, that, that is generally not something we do straight up, straight away because. Like you said the relationship, the feeling safe with me feeling comfortable. That's so important. If we don't have that, we really don't have anything.

[00:54:06] **Maya Benattar:** So this work happens in stages. Right. And so getting to the place of working with anger, anxiety, probably, I mean, everyone is different, probably doesn't happen right away. And always, you know, the option I always have. I'm a really good improviser, both musically and otherwise. And I always have another option up my sleeve.

[00:54:27] **Maya Benattar:** So if it's too much to pick a piece of music that connects to anger, anxiety, then you know, what, if I, you know, what if I just play it on an instrument, you don't have to touch an instrument, but what is it

like to just hear me play it just for like 30 seconds? And we see how that is, right? Because that's, it's a little farther removed, right?

[00:54:44] **Maya Benattar:** Yeah. Trusting that like, I can, I can take it. Right. And I'll say like, I'm okay with playing your anxiety. I'm not scared of it, which symbolic. Right? Like there's a lot of, there's a lot of power in that. I'm like, wow, am I, it isn't scared of my feeling. I've been scared of this feeling my whole life for good reason.

[00:55:00] **Maya Benattar:** Right. And so there's a lot of metaphor and symbol symbolism that happens in this work of like both of us literally playing, um, with these feelings, be exploring them, getting creative around them, getting to know them sometimes when doing music and imagery, I'll do it. I might do it with a client if I feel like if they ask of course.

[00:55:21] **Maya Benattar:** But if I feel like that might be helpful and supportive, I will offer like, do you want me to. You know, to do this with you. And sometimes that's so that's so grounding that's so that's the word that I want. They feel less alone. Right? And if they've always felt alone with their feelings to know that I'm listening to the same music, I'm creating an image.

[00:55:43] **Maya Benattar:** I'm not scared of it. It can feel just really like we are on this. We're figuring this out together. We're on this journey together. And so much of the experiences of trauma at any age. Is feeling alone is feeling on heard or not believed or unseen. And so to really, to share in that can be incredibly powerful.

[00:56:04] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. I'm just realizing how much vulnerability it really. I just started thinking about if my therapist. It's not a music therapist where to say, you know, share with me like a song that's meaningful to you. I probably would be like, you know, and it, and I might be like, oh, like part of me might be like, I want to share this.

[00:56:25] **Laura Reagan:** I want my therapist to know about this special thing for me. I know this isn't exactly what you're talking about, but I'm just thinking about the vulnerability of it. And then for the therapist to like, for me to sit there while he, he, my therapist is man listens to it. Oh, that just feels like, what is he thinking?

[00:56:46] **Laura Reagan:** Or whatever, you know, all that stuff. It's like funny what it can just like bring up when

[00:56:52] **Maya Benattar:** you're not expecting. She is really evocative. It's really intimate. It's really hard at all. And that can make it be very vulnerable. And it's a fine line, right? Like if we're not in therapy, if we're not working with something that, that feels new and potentially a little vulnerable in some way, then we're probably just looping the same.

[00:57:11] **Maya Benattar:** Yeah. And I always tell clients, we want to find that space. I don't want you crawling out of your skin. You know, like that's, that's not helpful, but if you're feeling too much in your comfort zone, then that's also not that, not that that middle people, I want people comfortable, but also like gently nudged, if that makes sense.

[00:57:29] **Laura Reagan:** Like, it's like yoga, it's like to your growth edge, but not injury.

[00:57:33] **Maya Benattar:** Yes, exactly. Thank you. That's much better.

[00:57:38] **Maya Benattar:** Yeah. We want to find that space and to be able to come back, right. Like yoga, such a great, great example. Right. Because, you know, I love when teachers are like, come back to child's pose at any point, which I do frequently. Um, and so, you know, and that's really, that's kind of like the, the. Of of therapy really of any kind of therapy, but particularly one which stretches your, your comfort zone.

[00:58:01] **Maya Benattar:** Right? And so we might, you know, if I'm working with someone, we will start, we might start a session with like feeling, getting comfortable and grounded. I might ask them to share, you know, what's something you've been listening to this week really like low key, not something that, you know, connects to a certain feeling.

[00:58:15] **Maya Benattar:** Boom, Hey, what were you listening to before we, before we started? And then we might go into to some more, you know, difficult, vulnerable stuff, but we always have the option to return back to places of comfort, both in the body and in music and in our relationship, and then to go back and forth. Right. And that's part of the whole process is figuring out when do we look at something that feels difficult?

[00:58:36] **Maya Benattar:** When do we come back to a familiar and calming place? And in the way that I work there, isn't a prescriptive way, a preset way that we do that. We're both of us figuring it out together in the most. And I figure it out individually for each client, because they're all so different and they're all in different, you know, week to week as we are all of us as humans.

[00:58:56] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. So interesting as you were saying that, and you and I are on video, even though the audience won't see this, that you were moving to, when you were saying, you know, we can be in the comfort and then we can be in the emotion and you know, it was rhythmic in the way you were demonstrating.

[00:59:13] **Maya Benattar:** I move a lot.

[00:59:14] **Maya Benattar:** I talk a lot with my hands. Yeah. Yeah. And I, it, it, it is. Yeah, I mean, there's rhythm and so much of, of what we do. And just, I often will kind of do, you know, like the figure eight motion for clients around, around moving in and out of vulnerability, right? Because we want to be gently challenged. That's why they're there.

[00:59:35] **Maya Benattar:** They want to be gently, at least some part of them wants to be gently challenged so that there can be change. And then they also want to feel safe because that is our deep human need is to feel safe and to feel held. Right. And again, that can be so repetitive for someone who didn't have that. He still doesn't have that.

[00:59:51] **Maya Benattar:** And so we go back and forth, right. And the music can just really hold both of those spaces. Like you said, it can be so vulnerable to share. It can be so vulnerable to use. Um, to pick a piece of music to, you know, to draw what a feeling looks like. Yeah. It's vulnerable. And the spaces in which we're, we are vulnerable are the spaces in which there is the potential for change.

[01:00:14] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah. I love it. Um, I'm just sensing, like, it's like, you know, that titration, like you were saying about the window of tolerance, that's like you get a taste of this discomfort or sensation or vulnerability or whatever it is, pain, sadness, fear, anger, whatever. And then you go back to the safety and the comfort of the therapeutic relationship and the familiar and now, and that gives you the like strength and trust to be able to try again a little bit differently or a little bit more or whatever. So

[01:00:48] **Maya Benattar:** Exactly. Yes. And thank you for bringing the word titration. And that's often a word that I'll, that I'll teach. Because the tendency often in trauma work is to, you know, to kind of jump headlong down the rabbit hole, to retell the story. And, and that tendency makes sense. But also we want to, to interrupt that pattern.

[01:01:08] **Maya Benattar:** I want to interrupt that pattern of, we don't want to, I don't want you to just tell me the same story. Um, I want to hear the story of the story matters, but doing in a way that feels safe. So I'll pause people and say, what's happening in your body as you're talking, or what's happening to your body as we're listening and, and just really, you know, doing little chunks at a time.

[01:01:27] **Maya Benattar:** And then over time, linking. Those pieces together.

[01:01:31] **Laura Reagan:** Exactly. I just want to underline that, like it's the, when you have, when one has this urgency to tell the story, and then they start telling the story and they're like barely stopping and, you know, they don't, maybe don't even seem to show any emotion as they tell it, but, you know, and then this happened and then this happened, then this happened, then this happens like that's, that's reliving re-experiencing, that's not, you know, being in your window of tolerance and feeling the emotions connected with it.

[01:02:00] **Laura Reagan:** That's just re-traumatizing

[01:02:02] **Maya Benattar:** right. And to think of, you know, think of that in rhythmic terms to kind of maybe come, come full circle. And exactly. If, if you're someone, if a client is retelling the same, you know, the story and just kind of a fast pressured way, there's no breath. The rhythm to that, right? If we, if you and I were to play and I'm making the gesture with my hand, right, there is no breath in there.

[01:02:23] **Maya Benattar:** And what, what does not avail? There's so much, it's not available to us. If we're not really connected to our breath, obviously they're breathing. I always tell clients like, you know, unless you've passed out, you're breathing in some sense. But if we have that sort of relentless rhythm, then you aren't connected to, to feeling your body, to feeling your breath.

[01:02:42] **Maya Benattar:** And so it's, it's playing around with the pauses, right? Like interjecting a little bit of like a in musical terms, like putting a rest in the middle of that, that measure. Right. Or having there be a long, a held for motto, like, you know, to think in musical terms, which we don't have to, but the pauses. Right.

[01:03:02] **Maya Benattar:** And how is even that, which is so subtle, but so important that shifts the. Right. So then, then the nervous system gets a different experience of a story they may have told so many times or never. Right. And so then, and I

[01:03:15] **Laura Reagan:** be like re they might be replaying it in their head constantly, even if they've never told.

[01:03:19] **Laura Reagan:** Right.

[01:03:20] **Maya Benattar:** Yeah. And so read. Exactly. And sometimes I find if someone is saying, and I've had this experience, as I'm sure you've had where they say, I've never told anyone this that's, that's true. And, but they've thought about it a lot. And so it'll often still come out in that really, really, really, really fast way, because it's spent so much time in their heads.

[01:03:36] **Maya Benattar:** And of course there's a desire to, for catharsis. We want the catharsis we want someone else to hold the story. And so it is, you know, it's always that, that balance. And again, I'm doing that movement with my hand that like figure eight that figuring out what, what a client needs. You know how to help them slow down, but also how to help them feel enough of the emotion so that we can work with it.

[01:03:58] **Maya Benattar:** Right. And finding, and that's always a sort of a navigation session, a session moment to moment. Yeah. And it's not always perfect. The thing about rhythm, you know, is that rhythms are not, are not meant to be perfect, right? Like, think about cycles of rupture and repair in our lives, which are again, normal and natural.

[01:04:18] **Maya Benattar:** And so rhythm is not meant to be perfect, just like we're not meant to always be calm. And so it can happen, you know, where we have, you know, a little bit of friction or kind of we've lost the thread and that's that just really mirrors. What, what rhythm, what relationships are lives are like in life. And so that's important to notice as well, that rhythm just waxes and wanes.

[01:04:40] **Laura Reagan:** Yeah, that's so interesting. I just, I know we have to stop that. I just started thinking about like marching bands and, you know, when I was a kid going to parades and stuff and the high school marching bands would be performing and how, you know, when they were in sync and rhythm, it felt there was something it's hard to put into words, but there was like a connected feeling with that.

[01:05:04] **Laura Reagan:** It would be like, you know, let's say there would be like or whatever, and they just all start doing it. And, and when they get to that point in the parade, you know, everybody who's watching is like, ah, you know,

it's just like something happens. And then maybe, yeah. And then like, it might, they switched to a different song.

[01:05:23] **Laura Reagan:** Something's off sync and then they go into a different thing and they're back in rhythm and it, it feels like that synchronicity. And I don't know, it's, it is hard to put it into words.

[01:05:34] **Maya Benattar:** Yeah. I think synchronicity is, is a great, is a great word. Right. And so we, and it just really mirrors what we've been talking about about feeling that, that sense of, of, um, consistency and reliability, right.

[01:05:47] **Maya Benattar:** In the therapy process, in the therapy room of like, I'm here, you're here, we're here in this feeling together. And we, we really crave that and we deserve that. As humans and we don't always get it. And so therapy can be such a, such a reparative place for that, to experience that right. To have experiences of we're here together and present with you, right.

[01:06:07] **Maya Benattar:** There's this back and forth exchange. It's consistent, consistent rhythm. Yeah.

[01:06:11] **Laura Reagan:** So cool. Well, Maya, thank you so much for coming back to talk about this today. This is really interesting, and I feel like I do have a deeper understanding now of how you use rhythm in your practice. And you know, of course I want to do it now.

[01:06:26] **Laura Reagan:** I'm like, oh, how can I try this? But where can people learn more about what you're doing? And, you know, if they want to work with you, I don't know if you're have openings or anything. Um,

[01:06:36] **Maya Benattar:** At, at the moment of this recording, I have a couple of openings, um, and I often will do like workshops and trainings and stuff for other professionals.

[01:06:45] **Maya Benattar:** So yes, the best place to, to find me is my website, which is just mayabenattar.com.

[01:06:51] **Laura Reagan:** Awesome.

[01:06:51] **Laura Reagan:** I'll link to that in the show notes for our listeners. And I just want to thank you again for being my guest for the second time on therapy chat today.

[01:07:00] **Maya Benattar:** Um, thanks for having me. I really enjoyed it.

[01:07:06] **Laura Reagan:** Thank you to therapy notes for sponsoring this week's episode. I do love Therapy Notes. It's such an asset to my business and makes my job as a practice owner and a therapist, much easier. Try today with no strings attached to see why everyone is switching to Therapy Notes. Now featuring e-prescribe use coupon code chat, or click the link in the show notes to get two free months at therapynotes.com.

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