



Dear Board-Certified Music Therapist

As a music therapist, you understand something many others miss:

Rhythm regulates and optimizes movement..  
Music organizes and supports the nervous system.  
Music accesses the brain in ways language alone cannot.

There is so much conflicting information in the media and professional literature right now. Many professionals are asking:

Why do traditional behavioral frameworks fail the students with the most complex needs?  
Why do some individuals clearly understand far more than they can reliably express?  
Why does rhythm sometimes unlock and coordinate movement when nothing else does?

And yet, within the broader autism conversation, neuromotor differences are often overlooked or misunderstood.

The **2026 Rethinking Autism Conference** invites you into a deeper conversation—one that aligns closely with neurologic music therapy principles. Through a neuromotor lens, we explore autism not as a disorder of motivation or behavior, but as a condition involving motor planning, sensory integration, timing, and regulation differences.

Topics include:

- Motor-based barriers to communication
- The role of rhythm and patterned sensory input
- Regulation before cognition
- Supporting purposeful movement and reliable communication
- Interdisciplinary collaboration across educational and therapeutic teams and caregivers

CEUs are available for Occupational Therapy, Music Therapy, and Behavioral Health and Human Services licenses.

Your expertise in rhythm, entrainment, and neurologic organization is essential to this conversation.

If you've seen music reach students who seemed otherwise "unreachable," this conference will resonate with you.

We would be honored to have music therapists and neurologic music therapists at the table as we rethink autism together.

With respect and anticipation,

Chris Cannon  
Optimal ACCESS  
2026 Rethinking Autism Conference

# REGISTER NOW RETHINKING AUTISM

## 2026 CONFERENCE

### SYNCHRONIZING CONNECTION, REGULATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR LEARNING

Join self-advocates, parents, caregivers, students, educators and practitioners from around the world when you attend this transformative event for innovative learning and skills training. In-person and virtual registrations will be available.

#### PARTICIPANTS WILL EXPERIENCE:

- Presentations by leading autism advocates, occupational therapists, applied neuroscience specialists, neurologic music therapists, educators and changemakers
- Stories of self-advocates who've overcome barriers to inspire systemic change
- Interactive workshops to gain practical tools for supporting autistic individuals
- Innovative approaches for multi-modal communication strategies to better support nonspeaking and minimally speaking individuals in their homes, schools and community



Administrators and state and regional agency directors are encouraged to attend.

CEUs are available for Occupational Therapy, Music Therapy, and Behavioral Health and Human Services licenses.

**REGISTER NOW**  
[bit.ly/3LMKngi](https://bit.ly/3LMKngi)



**Foundation  
Disability Resources**

# RETHINKING AUTISM

2026 CONFERENCE

SYNCHRONIZING CONNECTION, REGULATION,  
AND COMMUNICATION FOR LEARNING  
MARCH 19-20, 2026

## SESSION SPEAKERS



**Kaitlin Brazina, LMHC**  
Behavior Support Specialist



**Mike Kane, Self-Advocate**  
ACCESS Student, Speller

The 2026 Rethinking Autism Conference features a dynamic group of educators, clinicians, researchers, parents, and advocates who are reshaping how we understand autism through a neuromotor lens. Our speakers combine research, clinical expertise, and lived experience to equip professionals with practical tools for supporting individuals with the most complex needs.

## WORKSHOP LEADERS



**Erin Clarelli, MS, OTR/L**  
Occupational Therapist & CEO  
Sunrise Therapies, Inc.

Our workshop leaders—Erin Clarelli, Casey DePriest, and Eric Lund—bring deep clinical insight and practical experience in supporting individuals with high support needs. Their interactive sessions offer hands-on strategies in regulation, movement, and communication that participants can immediately apply.

CEUs are available for Occupational Therapy, Music Therapy, and Behavioral Health and Human Services licenses.

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Disability Resources



## **THURSDAY · MARCH 19, 2026**

- 7:45 AM**      **Registration & Exhibitors Open**
- 8:45 AM**      **Welcome & Introductions**
- 9:00 AM**      **Rethinking Regulation Through a Sensorimotor Lens**  
**Erin Clarelli, MS, OTR/L**
- 10:30 AM**     **Break / Exhibitors Open**
- 10:45 AM**     **From Behavior Management to Meaningful Support**  
**Kaitlin Brazina, LMHC**
- 11:45 AM**     **Lunch (On Your Own) / Exhibitors Open**
- 12:45 PM**     **Structured Movement Break / Drumming / Energizer**
- 1:00 PM**      **The Walk with Joaquin: Journey to Belonging**  
**Diana Pastora Carson, M.Ed**
- 2:00 PM.**      **Presuming Personhood: Nurturing Identity, Not Just Ability**  
**Tahni Cullen, Author (Josiah's Fire)**
- 3:00 PM**      **Break / Exhibitors Open**
- 3:15 PM**      **Panel Discussion: What's Working?**  
**Eric Lund · Noel Doogs · David Kane · Michelle Kirk · Ellis O'Reilly ·**  
**Kaitlin Brazina · Tahni Cullen · Dina Dardeen · Darcy Day**
- 4:15 PM**      **Q and A / Closing Discussion**
- 4:30 PM**      **Conference Day 1 Concludes**

**\*The conference schedule is subject to change as necessary.**



## **FRIDAY · MARCH 20, 2026**

- 8:15 AM** Registration & Exhibitors Open
- 8:45 AM** Welcome /Announcements / Introductions
- 9:00 AM.** Regulated: How Rhythm and Love Helped Me Find My Voice  
Mike Kane, Self-Advocate · ACCESS Student · Speller
- 9:30 AM** Workshop 1: Understanding Your Sensory Profile  
Erin Clarelli, MS, OTR/L
- 10:30 AM** Break / Exhibitors Open
- 10:45 AM** Workshop 2: Exploring Sensory Profiles Through Case Studies  
Erin Clarelli, MS, OTR/L
- 11:45 AM** Lunch (Provided)  
Where Method Meets Mission: The ACCESS Approach
- 12:45 PM** Structured Movement Break
- 1:00 PM** Rethink Down Syndrome  
Brady Mohr, Speller & Ambassador
- 1:30 PM** Workshop 3: The Rhythm of Relationship: Strengthening Support  
Teams of Nonspeakers through Neurologic Music Therapy™  
Casey DePriest, MT-BC, NMT
- 2:30 PM** Break / Exhibitors Open
- 2:45 PM** Workshop 4: Supporting Optimal Synchrony Through Innovative  
Simplicity with Eric Lund, MT-BC, NMT
- 3:45 PM** Q and A / Closing Discussions
- 4:15 PM** Conference Evaluations
- 4:30 PM** Conference Concludes

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## MUSIC THERAPISTS PRESENTING



**Casey DePriest, MT-BC**  
*Neurologic Music Therapist*

Casey DePriest is a board-certified music therapist who has been practicing in the Evansville, Indiana area since 1995. Casey has dedicated her career to the pursuit of improving services for individuals on the autism spectrum with complex communication and motor challenges. She has trained in Neurologic Music Therapy. She is passionate about learning from the true experts in autism – self-advocates, and advocating for students who do not have a voice to advocate for themselves. Casey has organized three annual Rethinking Autism Conferences, held each April in Evansville, Indiana, since 2015. Casey enjoys teaching, mentoring, and developing research-based support strategies.

Casey was recently recognized as an Evansville Courier & Press Health Care Hero and Optimal Rhythms, Inc. was recognized with a Leadership Evansville Award for Excellence in Education for the development of their innovative educational program, ACCESS Academy. Casey has also received a Change Maker Award from the American Music Therapy Association.



**Eric Lund, MT-BC**  
*Neurologic Music Therapist*

Eric Lund is Director of Student Engagement at Optimal ACCESS, a board-certified music therapist (MT-BC), neurologic music therapist (NMT), composer, and mentor, with more than 17 years of clinical experience. After earning his degree, he began his career with Integrative Music Therapy, LLC. He later played a key role in founding Optimal ACCESS and ACCESS Academy—an innovative school supporting nonspeaking autistic students in earning a high school diploma. Eric specializes in neurologic music therapy for individuals with sensory and neuromotor movement disorders. He provides clinical supervision for interns, mentors practicing therapists, and presents at regional and national conferences, often in collaboration with self-advocates. Passionate about making music accessible to all, Eric also enjoys composing and songwriting. He lives in Indiana with his wife and is a proud “Girl Dad.”

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this conference, participants will be able to:

- **Analyze regulation and participation through a sensorimotor lens**, identifying how motor planning, sensory integration, and movement-based differences impact learning, communication, and daily functioning. (CBMT Domains 2025: 2B-1, 2B-3, 2B13, 2B16, 2D-2)
- **Apply strengths-based intervention strategies** that move from behavior management toward meaningful, person-centered support that nurtures identity, belonging, and autonomy. (CBMT Domains 2025: 2D-2, 2D23)
- **Implement practical assessment and intervention tools** to strengthen sensory profiling, co-regulation, multi-modal communication, and team-based support for nonspeaking and minimally speaking individuals. (CBMT Domains 2025: 2D23, 2D25, 2D29; 3A-3, 3A-7, 3A32, 3A33)
- **Integrate rhythm- and relationship-based approaches**, including principles from Neurologic Music Therapy™ and interdisciplinary collaboration, to promote synchrony, engagement, and functional communication outcomes. (CBMT Domains 2025: 3A-4, 3A-6, 3A-11, 3A33)

## CANCELLATION & REFUND POLICY

You may request to cancel your course enrollment for a partial refund if the request is submitted in writing to [Fatima@inmusictherapy.com](mailto:Fatima@inmusictherapy.com) at least 14 days prior to the event. Please note that there is a \$50 non-refundable registration fee.

## STATEMENT OF RELATIONSHIP

The 2026 Rethinking Autism Conference is approved by the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) for 18 CMTEs (Continuing Music Therapy Education credits). The provider, Optimal ACCESS, #155, maintains responsibility for program quality and adherence to CBMT policies and criteria

Completion of this Opportunity does not ensure that the participant is currently a Board-Certified Music Therapist (MT-BC).

## CONTINUING EDUCATION AVAILABLE

**18 CMTEs / 15.5 CEUs**

## MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

Optimal ACCESS | 1003 SR 662 W | Newburgh, IN 47630 | 812-490-9401  
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