Music and Your Body: How Music Affects Us and Why Music Therapy Promotes Health

How and Why Is Music A Good Tool For Health?

By Elizabeth Scott, M.S.
Stress Management Expert

Research has shown that music has a profound effect on your body and psyche. In fact, there’s a growing field of health care known as music therapy, which uses music to heal. Those who practice music therapy are finding a benefit in using music to help cancer patients, children with ADD, and others, and even hospitals are beginning to use music and music therapy to help with pain management, to help ward off depression, to promote movement, to calm patients, to ease muscle tension, and for many other benefits that music and music therapy can bring. This is not surprising, as music affects the body and mind in many powerful ways. The following are some of effects of music, which help to explain the effectiveness of music therapy:

• Brain Waves: Research has shown that music with a strong beat can stimulate brainwaves to resonate in sync with the beat, with faster beats bringing sharper concentration and more alert thinking, and a slower tempo promoting a calm, meditative state. Also, research has found that the change in brainwave activity levels that music can bring can also enable the brain to shift speeds more easily on its own as needed, which means that music can bring lasting benefits to your state of mind, even after you’ve stopped listening.

• Breathing and Heart Rate: With alterations in brainwaves comes changes in other bodily functions. Those governed by the autonomic nervous system, such as breathing and heart rate can also be altered by the changes music can bring. This can mean slower breathing, slower heart rate, and an activation of the relaxation response, among other things. This is why music and music therapy can help counteract or
prevent the damaging effects of chronic stress, greatly promoting not only relaxation, but health.

- State of Mind: Music can also be used to bring a more positive state of mind, helping to keep depression and anxiety at bay. This can help prevent the stress response from wreaking havoc on the body, and can help keep creativity and optimism levels higher, bringing many other benefits.

- Other Benefits: Music has also been found to bring many other benefits, such as lowering blood pressure (which can also reduce the risk of stroke and other health problems over time), boost immunity, ease muscle tension, and more. With so many benefits and such profound physical effects, it’s no surprise that so many are seeing music as an important tool to help the body in staying (or becoming) healthy.

Using Music Therapy:
With all these benefits that music can carry, it's no surprise that music therapy is growing in popularity. Many hospitals are using music therapists for pain management and other uses. Music therapists help with several other issues as well, including stress. For more information on music therapy, visit the American Music Therapy Association's website.

Using Music On Your Own:
While music therapy is an important discipline, you can also achieve many benefits from music on your own. Music can be used in daily life for relaxation, to gain energy when feeling drained, for catharsis when dealing with emotional stress, and in other ways as well. This article on music, relaxation and stress management can explain more of how music can be an especially effective tool for stress management, and can be used in daily life.
Journal Prompt/Experiment

For this journal entry, you will be conducting a music therapy experiment for two days while you are at home doing homework. On one day, do your homework while listening to a fast paced song. On another day, do your homework listening to a slow song. Answer these questions for each day:

1. Which song did you listen to? (Title and Artist)
2. How did the song make you feel and why?
3. Were you more or less productive than normal while doing your homework by listening to this song? Explain.
4. Did you enjoy listening to music while doing homework? Why or why not?

5. (Only answer this question after you finished your second experiment) Which song did you prefer working to and why?

Write both entries in one Word document at home, email it or save it to a flash drive, then bring it to school to upload to Your Pdrive.
Have you ever wondered how music might affect our health? It's an explosive expression of humanity. Of course the music industry favours certain types of music and is designed to not allow indie bands to get very far, but that is a whole other discussion. Music is capable of a number of health benefits including lowering stress levels, raising states of consciousness, changing moods, accessing different states of mind, developing the brain and is useful in meditation—which has a ton of health benefits. The fact is, there isn’t a single human culture on earth that has lived without music! Both tools are essential for the trauma therapy toolbox. They are noninvasive and helpful for overcoming the effects of trauma. Here, we present six proven ways that music can help you and your family’s health.

1. Chronic back pain.

How it helps: Music works on the autonomic nervous system—the part of the nervous system responsible for controlling our blood pressure, heartbeat and brain function—and also the limbic system—the part of the brain that controls feelings and emotions. According to one piece of research, both these systems react sensitively to music. Listening to music on a regular basis helps our bodies relax physically and mentally, thus helping to relieve and prevent back pain. The research: A new study from Austria’s General Hospital of Salzburg due to be published in The Vienna Medical Weekly Journal could hold the key to back pain. The effect of music on our body chemistry is particularly fascinating to me. Our bodies effectively contain an internal pharmacy that dispenses various chemicals to help us deal with life’s challenges. For example, if you’re in a dangerous situation, you’ll receive a shot of adrenaline to give you energy, and if you do something which is good for you, you get a dose of serotonin (which encourages you to do the same thing again). Research has revealed that music holds the keys to your body’s pharmacy, and can promote or suppress the release of these chemicals. For example, loud and rhythmic music can increase your adrenaline levels, which will help to keep you awake during a long, boring drive. Learn about the health benefits of music and how to use music therapy to relieve stress, reduce pain, and improve your health.

What is music therapy? Can music help heal us? What role does music play in our health and happiness? Can music be a form of medicine? Let me share what I’ve learned about the health benefits of music. The Stroke Victim Who Was Healed by Music Therapy. And music is one of the lifestyle choices we can make that relieves stress and anxiety, decreases pain, and protects against disease. Stefan Koelsch, a senior research fellow in neurocognition at the University of Sussex in Brighton, summarizes the healing effects of music by saying, "Music can't say music is a pill to abolish diseases."