

Reprint

New Study Confirms It: Music is a Must for Your Good Health ... and Your Brain

by www.SixWise.com

A new study in the journal *Heart* has good news for music lovers: whether you are seeking arousal and vivaciousness or calm and relaxation, music is a must. What's more, the researchers found that such reactions are good for your heart.

Participants in the study listened to raga (Indian classical music), Beethoven's ninth symphony (classical), rap (the Red Hot Chili Peppers), Vivaldi (fast classical), techno and Anton Webern (slow "dodecaphonic music").

When listening to fast music with complex rhythms (classical, techno, etc.), participants' breathing and circulation sped up--the faster the music, the greater the degree of physiological arousal. Meanwhile, slower music (raga, etc.) created a fall in heart rate and induced calm. The reactions occurred regardless of the individuals' musical preference.

During two-minute pauses in the musical sequences, all indicators of arousal fell below levels recorded before listening to any music. The researchers say these reactions could be helpful in heart disease and stroke.

Music for Stress Reduction and Job Burnout

Music is, of course, also an excellent tool for stress relief, as anyone who's ever zoned out to their favorite CD after a hard day can attest to. A sense of calm can be achieved not only from listening to music, but also from making it.

A landmark study published in *Advances in Mind-Body Medicine* found that a Recreational Music-Making (RMM) program, in which employees use percussion instruments together to create a sense of camaraderie, drastically reduced employee burnout and mood disturbances among long-term care workers. Long-term care is one of the most stress-prone industries, and it suffers from a high rate of employee turnover, burnout and dissatisfaction.

So researchers were pleased to find that RMM reduced total mood disturbance by 46 percent among this group. Plus, during the program many experienced "a refreshing sense of group nurturing and support, coupled with heightened interpersonal awareness and respect, which prompted ongoing meaningful dialogues."

Like Sleep? Try Music

A study published in the February 2005 edition of The Journal of Advanced Nursing found that older adults with sleep problems who listened to soft music at bedtime reported a 35 percent improvement in their sleep. The participants slept longer and better, and had less daytime dysfunction, after listening to 45 minutes of music before bed.

"The difference between the music group and the control group was clinically significant," said Hui-Ling Lai, lead author of the study. "The music group reported a 26 percent overall improvement in the first week and this figure continued to rise as they mastered the technique of relaxing to the sedative music."

Music and Your Brain

There's no question that music has a beneficial effect on your mind. A 2004 study in the journal Heart & Lung even found proof. **People who listened to music while they exercised, researchers said, performed more than twice as well on a verbal fluency test than people who listened to no music.**

Said the study's lead author, Charles Emery, " ... Listening to music may influence cognitive function through different pathways in the brain. The combination of music and exercise may stimulate and increase cognitive arousal while helping to organize cognitive output."

Music Therapy on the Rise

Music therapy, the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship, is a growing field. According to the American Music Therapy Association, music therapy can be used to help:

- Children, adolescents, adults and the elderly with mental health needs, developmental
- and learning disabilities
- Alzheimer's disease and other age-related conditions
- Substance abuse problems
- Brain injuries
- Physical disabilities
- Acute and chronic pain, including mothers in labor

As certified music therapists continue to pop up in psychiatric hospitals, rehabilitative facilities, medical hospitals, outpatient clinics, day care treatment centers and more all over the country, it's clear just how much impact music can have on our well-being.

You can find out what effects music has on you right from your own home--just pop in your favorite CD, sit back and listen.

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