

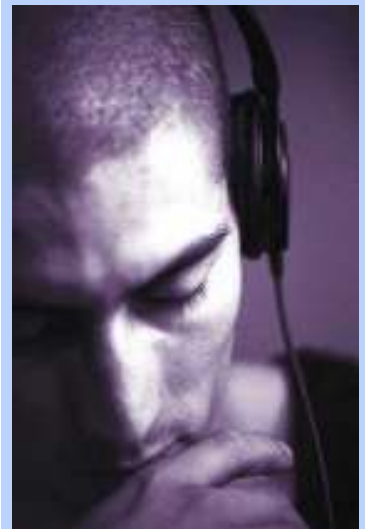


Balanced Living

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Newsletter Content

- *Music and Mood.*
- *Music Therapy: Stress Relief and Wellness.*
- *What is a Music Therapist?*
- *Finding Harmony in life.*



Music has direct access to the emotions. As such, it's a fantastic tool for tweaking our moods.

Music and Mood

When people think of depression and what can help treat it, the first thing that often comes to mind is medication or antidepressants. Depending on the type of depression and severity, medication may be an effective method of treatment.

As depression is studied to gain more understanding about why people become depressed, it has been found that certain types of music may also be an effective treatment method for improving a depressed individual's mood.

Not all music will affect a person in a positive way and not all the same music will affect different people in the same way. It depends on the individual and what they find to be calming. It also has much to do with what lyrics are in the music, because even subconsciously an individual can pick up on what is being said, and also what kind of sound the music has, such as a harsh or soft sound.

There are many ways music influences our mood. Music is energy - vibrations that have a certain frequency. As we listen to the music, our brainwaves may adjust to match the vibrations of the music. This is why music can be very effective for meditation.

Your memories may also be part of the influence of music. Many times, the brain stores emotion alongside memories - if a song makes you blue, you might remember a time when you were really sad, and that song came on the radio, associating itself to that sad feeling. Your brain created a direct link between the song and the emotion, so every time you hear the song, that emotion surfaces.

You can use music as a tool to help you achieve the feelings that you want. If you want to have a more relaxed environment at work, play music that calms you and helps you to focus. There is music that is specifically designed to help you meditate, influencing your brainwaves into a specific pattern. You can play upbeat music when cleaning the house or exercising. If you're feeling down you can listen to inspirational music.

Music can have a big influence on your mood, increasing your ability to relax, making you feel good, increasing your focus and much more. When you choose music for yourself and the people around you, consider how you want to feel, then choose music that can help produce that feeling.

MUSIC THERAPY

Music therapy is a branch of health care designed to aid physical and emotional health through the use of music, either with listening, song writing, performing, exploring lyrics or other activities related to music. It's often found as part of stress management programs or used in conjunction with exercise, and is used in a variety of health care settings, to improve both short-term conditions and more serious long-term ones.



While music therapy is an emerging field, music itself has many benefits for health and stress management, and can be used in daily life to relieve stress and promote wellness.



- **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. Research has also 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 controlled by the autonomic nervous system, such as breathing and heart rate, can also be altered by the changes music can bring. This means slower breathing and slower

heart rate, resulting in 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 manage depression and anxiety. This can help prevent the stress that causes physical, emotional and psychological strain from wreaking havoc on the body, and can help keep creativity and optimism levels higher.
- **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 to stay (or become) healthy.



With all these benefits that music can carry, it's no surprise that music therapy is growing in popularity. While music therapy is an important discipline, you can also achieve benefits from music on your own.

One of the great benefits of music as a stress reliever is that it can be used while you conduct your regular activities so that it really doesn't take time away from your busy schedule. Music provides a wonderful backdrop for your life so that you can find increased enjoyment from what you're doing and also reduce stress from your day.

The following are some of the ways you can use music to enhance your regular activities:

1. You can wake yourself up with music, and start your day feeling great, setting the tone for a lower-stress day.
2. Put an end to road rage by playing your favorite music in the car. It can relieve some of the tension you feel from the commute itself and help you feel less like you're wasting time in traffic.
3. If you put on some smooth jazz or other genre of music that you enjoy, cooking becomes a fun activity rather than a chore.
4. Throw on some energetic music, hip-hop or pop, for example, while you clean and you can raise your energy level.
5. Playing music as you drift off is one way to counteract the effects of stress by taking your mind off of what's stressing you, slowing down your breathing, and soothing your mind.



What is a Music Therapist?



Music therapy is the clinical evidenced-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program. It consists of using music therapeutically to address physical, psychological, cognitive and/or social functioning to people of all ages. In addition to its application in mental health, music therapy is used successfully in a variety of healthcare and educational settings.



Music therapists use music strategies, both instrumental and vocal, which are designed to facilitate change that are non-musical in nature. Music therapists implement programs with groups or individuals that display a vast continuum of needs, from reduction of anxiety to deeper self-understanding.



Clients do not need a music background to benefit from music therapy. Individualized music experiences often result in immediate response.



- Music therapy intervention provides opportunities to:
- Explore personal feelings and therapeutic issues such as self-esteem or personal insight.
 - Make positive changes in mood and emotional states.
 - Have a sense of control over life through successful experiences.
 - Enhance awareness of self and environment.
 - Express oneself both verbally and non-verbally.
 - Develop coping and relaxation skills.
 - Support healthy feelings and thoughts.
 - Improve reality testing and problem solving skills.
 - Interact socially with others.
 - Improve attention and concentration span.
 - Develop independence and decision making skills.



Graduates of an approved music therapy program take a national exam administered by the Certified Board for Music Therapists. Any individual who does not have proper training and credentials is not qualified to provide music therapy services.

Music therapists offer services in psychiatric treatment centers, outpatient clinics, community mental health centers, substance abuse programs, group homes, rehabilitation facilities, medical hospitals, senior centers, schools, hospice and other facilities. Some music therapists specialize in mental health with additional training.

Music therapy research has shown evidence of :

- Reduced muscle tension.
- Improved self-image.
- Decreased anxiety/agitation.
- Enhanced interpersonal relationships.
- Increased motivation.
- Successful and safe emotional release.

How can you find a music therapist or get additional information?

American Music Therapy Association
8455 Colesville Road, Suite 1000
Silver Spring, MD 20910
Phone: (301) 589-3300
Fax: (301) 589-5175
Web: <http://www.musictherapy.org>
Email: info@musictherapy.org



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Finding Harmony in Life

A single note, or humming a tune, can give pleasure to the ear but harmony is only achieved through the interaction of notes in relation to other notes. In the same way, your interaction with the many facets of this world can provide you with a sense of satisfying sounds or, if out of tune, can make you cringe in discomfort.

That discomfort can only be tolerated for a period of time before something has to change. Finding yourself in disharmony with any area of your life can affect you emotionally as well as physically.

When a relationship is “out of tune” the resulting emotions are sometimes depression, frustration and possibly anger. Physical symptoms may also develop which could include headaches, back pain, decreased or increased appetite, shakiness or even a change in blood pressure.

Finding harmony in your life is a daily process that requires awareness of the “sour notes” that surface throughout the day. If an event, situation or relationship is causing you discomfort, begin finding ways to decrease the dissonance and focus on becoming harmonious in your interactions with others and with yourself.

Depending on the nature of the discord in your life and the impact it has on your daily functioning, community resources may be helpful in bringing harmony back into your life. Finding a counselor you are comfortable with, along with using current supports, is one way to make changes you may be looking for. Also, there are often groups open to the public that address specific issues or concerns.

Stay in harmony with the symphony of life and the music will produce sounds that are satisfying to your ear, as well as your mood.

Mike is a Licensed Professional Counselor in Northwest Metro Atlanta, Georgia. He has been in the mental health profession for 20 years and provides psychotherapy for adult individuals and couples.

Please feel free to contact him with comments on topics in this newsletter or suggestions for future articles.