

The Brain, Grief & Music

Listening to music may not sound like much of a coping skill, but music is a wondrous thing when applied properly. But what we have not really explained is just WHY music can be so helpful.

We have a pleasure center in our brain where all sorts of feel-good neurotransmitters make us feel really good when we do certain things. Sometimes we resort to negative coping to stimulate that pleasure center – things like sugary and fattening foods or drinking alcohol. Music is connected to the pleasure center of our brain too. This is why music can be such a great coping tool; it allows us to release feel-good neurotransmitters without resorting to wine and Ben and Jerry's ice cream.

Multiple studies have shown that music can:

- Help with memory and concentration
- Help us work more efficiently
- Help us make better decisions
- Boost energy
- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Reduce physical symptoms like high blood pressure, heart rate and cortisol rates.
- Boost your mood

Another great way to boost mood is exercise. For those of us who prefer the couch, music can be a great motivator for exercise and help us work out longer and harder. An additional research study demonstrates that music can increase stamina and help people push through exhaustion when exercising. And this study showed that we exercise more efficiently when we exercise to the tempo of the music.

When we listen to music, we can perceive the emotions in a song, but then derive pleasure from appreciating the music itself. In this way, we can enjoy sad songs. Not to mention that I believe sad songs make us feel less alone.

For those who are more musically inclined, the value of music is not just in listening to music, but also in creating music. So get going on some playlists – one to boost your mood, one to reduce stress, one to pump you up when you work out, and one for the days that you just want to listen to sad music and enjoy it.

Excerpted from:

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