

Menopause matters™

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Why they should be the subject of the same conversation

MUSIC & MEDITATION

How can it help you avoid burn out, build resilience and get you to your own happy place

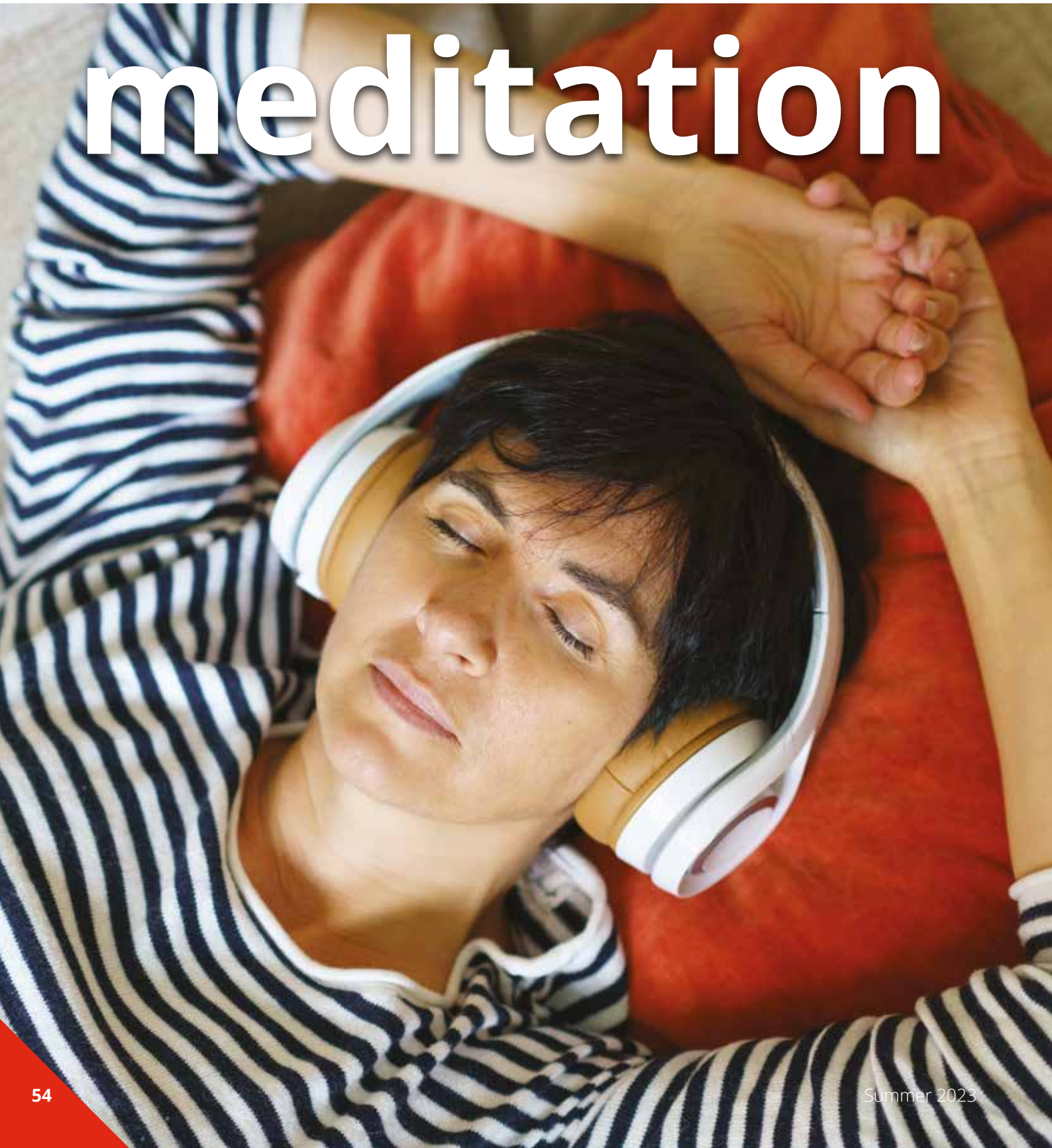
+ PLUS...

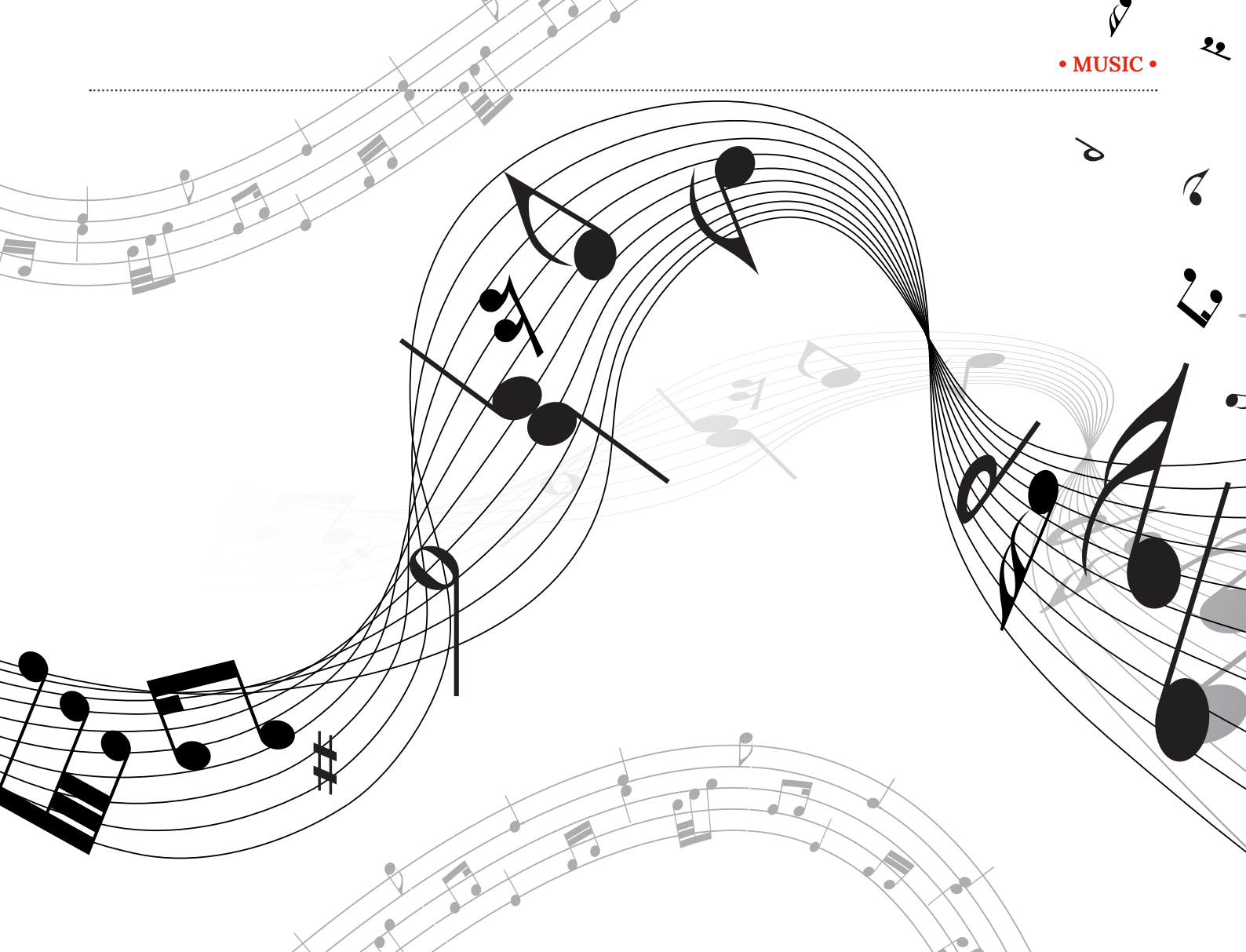
Drawbacks to Calorie Counting
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and more...



Music and

meditation





In her continuing series on how music can help you through your menopause transition Dominique Levack looks at its meditative qualities.

When people talk about their meditation practice I used to feel slightly envious and wish that I could have the focus to build in such a worthy activity into my own life. There's always so much else to do, and at speed.

I'd say to myself 'I just haven't got the time', or 'tomorrow' but the truth is especially now during menopause, I haven't got time not to.

My ADHD can get so loud and consuming, and since developing tinnitus after Covid, finding a calm quiet 30 minutes in my day is a must have, and not a would be nice to have.

If I don't find the time, my stress accumulates and I reach burn out very quickly. Sound familiar?

Studies have shown that regular meditation offers reductions in anxiety, depression, stress levels and job burnout and psychological benefits include:

- **Heightened empathy,**
- **Improved interoceptive awareness (stimuli and sensations within the body)**
- **Better psychological wellbeing**
- **Increased self-directedness (awareness that our actions and behaviors reflect our choices)**
- **Improved cooperativeness (degree of agreeableness in relationships with others)**
- **More self transcendence (rising above the self and relating to something bigger)**
- **(Matiz et al., 2020; Galante et al., 2021)**
- **Benefits of meditation include physical changes to the brain and improved cognitive functioning, such as**
- **Slowing of brain aging (particularly thinning of the prefrontal cortex)**
- **Improved attention**
- **Increased innovation**
- **Better problem-solving**
- **Mental health conditions following trauma (Shapiro, 2020)**



Working as a specialist in music interventions requires me to give of myself and connect with people musically, on a daily basis. I work with people who have profound disabilities, non-verbal quadriplegics, neurological diseases, dementia, autism and everything in between. So, I'm coming into contact with lots of different energies several times a day.

The dream drum

However, recently, since swapping my kora for a dream drum / tongue drum, I am noticing that this tuned percussion tonal instrument is having an extraordinary effect on my clients, and often allows them to reach a stillness and inner calm that is akin to a meditative state.

The tone is soft and there are set notes in a specific scale around the drum that you play with felted beaters or by hand in a rhythmic way, so the music becomes hypnotic.

The drum's limitations become its strength as you repeat shapes and patterns across the instrument with small perceivable changes.

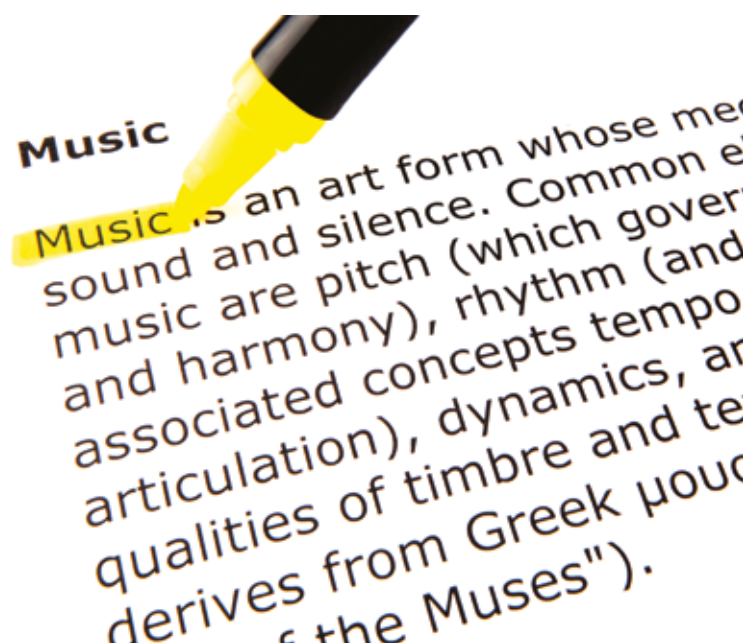
In a therapeutic situation with its soothing timbre, the music can lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol and release endorphins, our natural happy hormones effecting calm, and pain-killing and mood-enhancing properties. I see this happening within five minutes of playing, as agitation turns to calm, stims and tics lessen, and it's not unusual for them to fall asleep.

This is as close to meditation as it may be possible for my clients to get, and it's no surprise that music has been the route.

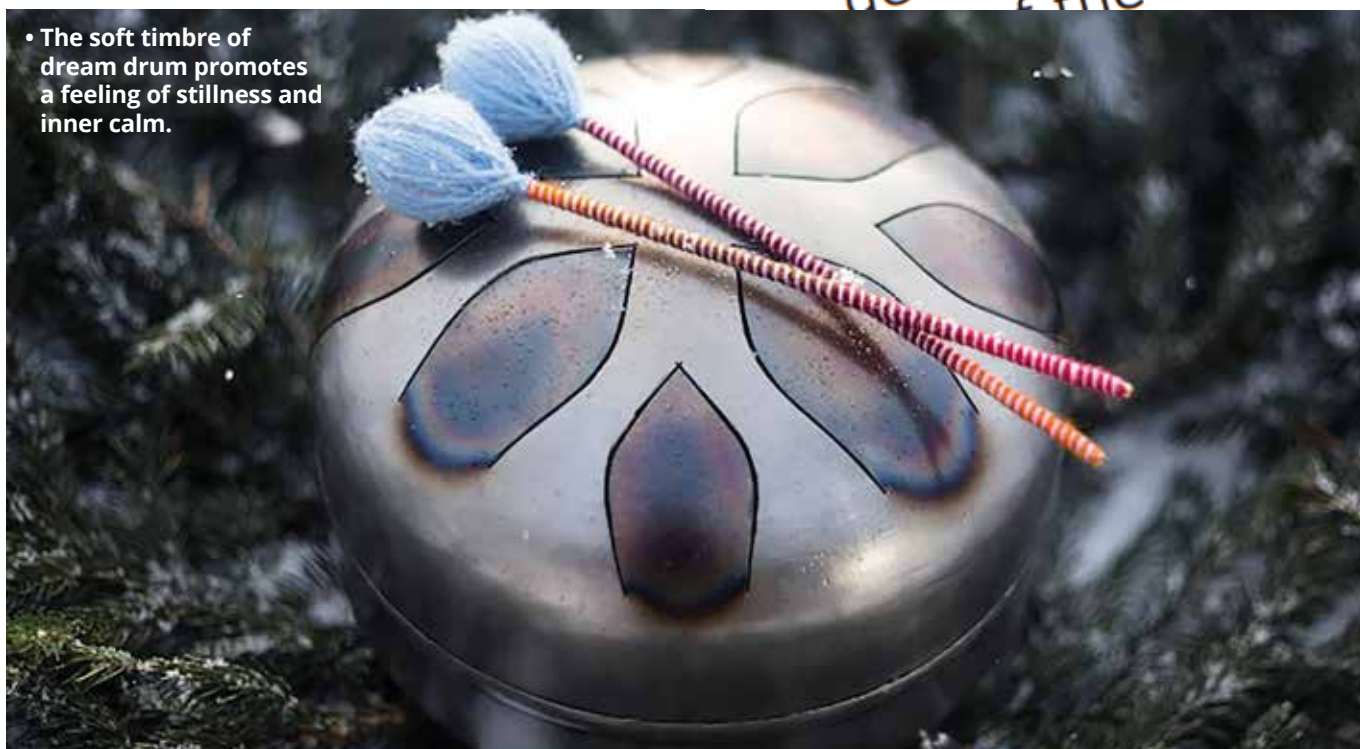
Music and meditation are a great combination with one helping the other along! Some people find silence impossible and stressful in itself, while others find the chatter of the mind distracting. With the help of relaxing music, our minds can switch off - calming your physiology so that we can enter into a more natural state of receptivity.

Resilience

Regular meditation can help build resilience, which during the menopause can be a game changer. Recognizing when you are getting overloaded is important, and if we take the time to feel calmness in our bodies, we can then recognize when we are feeling the opposite and do something about it. →



• The soft timbre of dream drum promotes a feeling of stillness and inner calm.



• “The perspective and space that music and nature offers couldn’t be more important for our mental well-being and offers something genuinely meditative and restorative.”
Alan Davey, Controller of BBC Radio 3.



← This is the gift that meditation gives us – and the crazy thing is, it’s FREE and ready whenever we are!

Just 10 – 20 minutes is the recommended time, but as we know even the length of a song can help relax us.

However, to give yourself the best chance of switch off, I would avoid songs when meditating as the lyrics will hook into your cognitive functions and you will be listening and relating to the words, while trying to think of nothing – and getting yourself into a mutiny pickle!

If you like the human voice, Gregorian or Tibetan chanting music may tickle your fancy, with its slow-moving beauty and breath control.

Similarly, music featuring natural sounds is popular, as you can connect with nature while being soothed into a feeling of wellbeing.

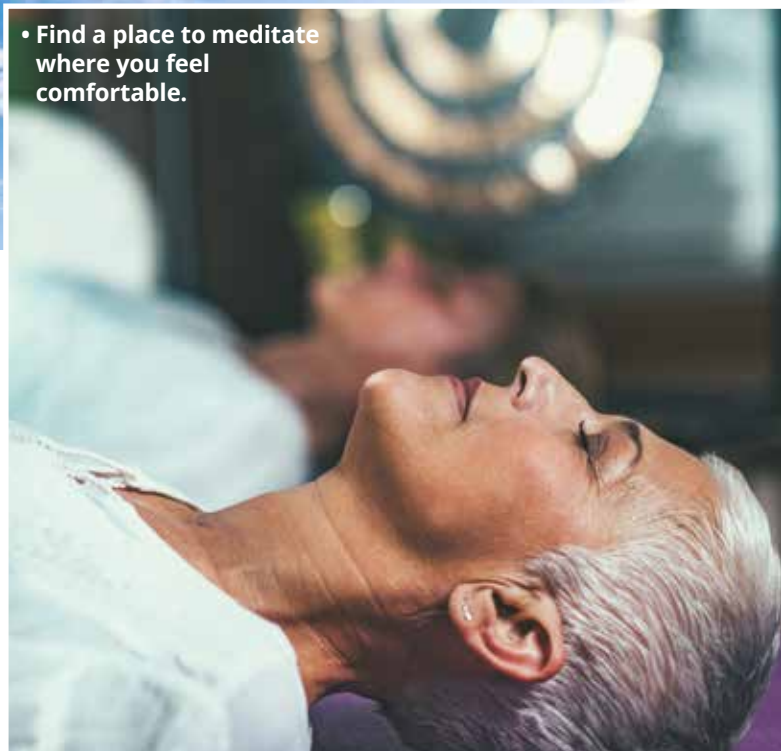
Musical nature

In 2021 during the pandemic and lockdown BBC Radio invited audiences to take part in a major UK-wide nature experiment, which researched the potential of virtual nature experiences to boost our wellbeing.

Alan Davey, controller of BBC Radio 3, said: “Helping listeners enjoy the healing powers of both music and nature has always been vital to Radio 3. The perspective and space that music and nature offers couldn’t be more important for our mental well-being, and offers something genuinely meditative and restorative.”

The BBC also offered its vast natural sound archive to audiences and a mixing function, so listeners can mix together their own favourite sounds to create a personalized nature play list!

• Find a place to meditate where you feel comfortable.



I’ve just spent a glorious hour mixing birdsong from across the world together, follow these links to make your own.

sound-effects.bbcrewind.co.uk/search
canvas-story.bbcrewind.co.uk/soundscapesforwellbeing/

What you need

The key to learning how to meditate is patience and time! You need a good dollop of both to get into it. Turn off your phone and find a place in your home that you feel comfortable in - could be the bedroom, or sofa or even the garden if you can keep warm.

Find a device where you can listen to your chosen music without adverts, and set your track to play easily.

Lie down on your back with a blanket over you and get into a position with your hands on your tummy or resting on the ground. Have a nice pillow for your head and make sure your neck is supported.



Close your eyes.

- **Breathe in for 5 counts and out for 5. Each time increase it by 1 count until you get to 10. Then stay at 10 for as long as possible.**
- **Focus on your breath, or listen to the music but just allow breath to flow.**
- **For the first few minutes don't worry if your mind conjures up to do lists, races from thought to thought and generally goes into overdrive about Christmas. This is quite natural, but don't give up.**
- **Let the thoughts go and agree to attend to them later. As you persevere the thoughts will subside and eventually you can find a moment of tranquility. Listening to the music helps quiet the mind to find a deeper level of relaxation.**
- **Let yourself be transported. It's about letting go, and that's not as easy as you think!**
- **After 5 minutes or so, you may feel ready to come back to a wakeful state, so allow yourself time to return fully to your body. Perhaps twiddle your toes and slowly open your eyes.**
- **Your body has become relaxed and your senses will want to acclimatize to where you are so allow time to become present.**
- **Notice how you feel.**

This is the GOLD you have been waiting for.



With any luck you will have new awareness, a lighter sense of being and any anxieties will hopefully have been reduced to a noticeable degree.

Even if you only managed a few minutes, you have started the process, and given yourself a real gift.

The science proves what our bodies feel.

My music meditation suggestions:

- This company creates original music, which you can buy, and download, supporting music therapy producers:
binauralbeatsmeditation.com/?ap_id=dominiquelevack
youtube.com/watch?v=SBiwLibZqfw
youtube.com/watch?v=s_g7HaZAYP0&t=864s
French composer, Erik Satie.



Dominique is a composer, songwriter and music specialist. She has recently started hosting retreats in her beloved Granada, Spain where she was one of the first female DJ's playing under the name DJ Aquarius playing flamenco and world music in 2006.

This September Dominique is offering 8 places on a 5 day / 4 night Women only retreat in the beautiful Alpujarra mountains of Andalusia Spain.

Set in a peaceful olive and almond grove this retreat offers rest and relaxation in nature. Simple living in beautifully decorated yurts and casitas, day dreaming beds, swimming pool and birdsong.

All nutritious home cooked meals are included, airport transfers, daily yoga, sunset singing and a chance to make memories under a Spanish sky. Give yourself the gift of 5 days of chill and nothing to do!

Details can be found on her website:
dominiquelevack.com/womens-retreat

References
positivepsychology.com/benefits-of-meditation/