

Lyrics For the Soul

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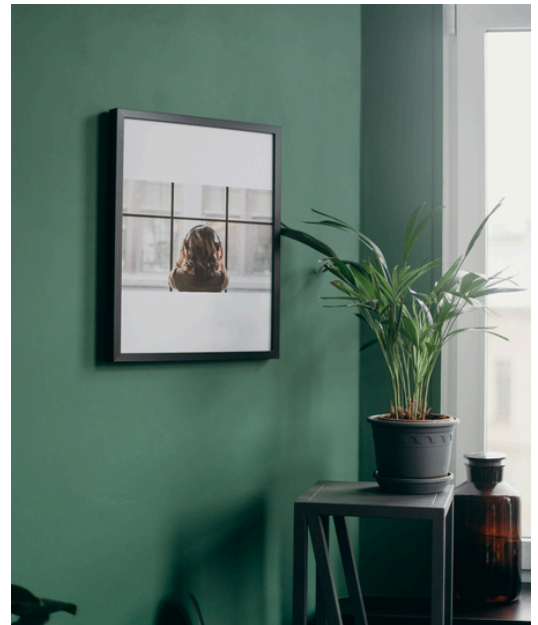
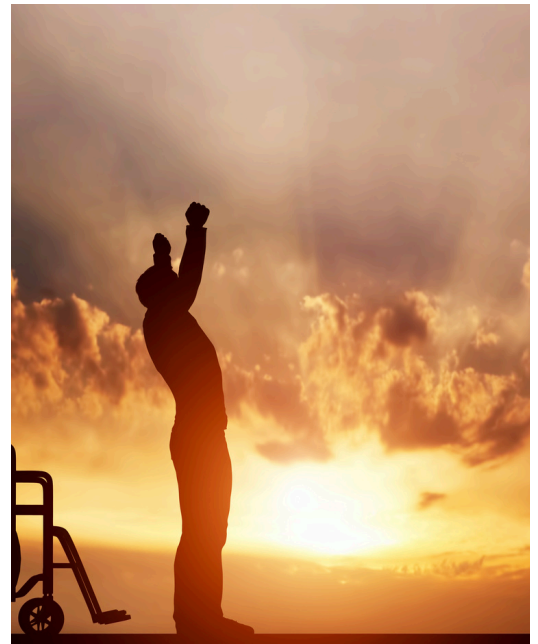
Introduction

Music has a profound ability to heal and promote health. Its power lies in its capacity to evoke emotions, create connections, and transform experiences.

Throughout history, music has been used as a therapeutic tool to alleviate pain, reduce stress, and foster a sense of well-being.

Whether through the rhythmic beats of a drum, the soothing melody of a lullaby, or the uplifting lyrics of a favorite song, music can touch the deepest parts of our soul, facilitating healing in ways that words alone cannot.

Music's impact is universal, transcending cultural and linguistic barriers. It brings people together, fosters community, and provides a shared language of healing. By understanding and harnessing the power of music, we can unlock new pathways to health and emotional well-being, enriching our lives in countless ways.



THE *Journey*

My journey with music began in 1995 when I was working as a junior and high school counselor in the Lawton Public School system.

I was selected, along with 19 other counselors, to assist with the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing. This was my first experience working on a national crisis. Assigned to Mark Twain School, I counseled students and staff, quickly realizing the need for tools beyond my master's degree.

I needed ways to help individuals express and tell their stories when faced with crisis or trauma. This experience led me to pursue a higher degree in Expressive Arts Therapy (psychology).

The soul is the seat of feelings, desires, and affections. *"Words are potent for good and evil."* Messages combined with music shape thoughts and beliefs across generations and cultures, for better or worse.



Lyrics can influence our beliefs and behaviors as much as books or the evening news.

Think of the music you listen to as part of your sonic diet. The content of that music affects your system just as the food you eat does.

Consuming junk food or sugar regularly, or repeatedly exposing yourself to negative programming through your musical diet, makes it challenging to create and maintain the mindset and energy needed for a healthy and fulfilling life.

The key is to be aware of how words are affecting our internal programming.



Health Benefits of Music

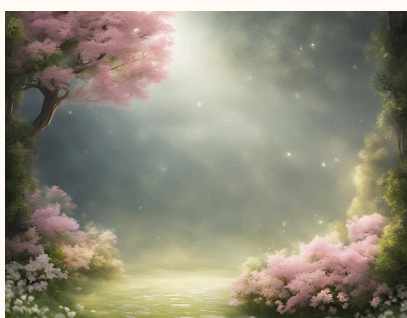


Music can improve mood, decrease pain and anxiety, and facilitate opportunities for emotional expression.

Research suggests that music can benefit our physical and mental health in numerous ways.

Music therapy is used by our hospice and palliative care board-certified music therapist to enhance conventional treatment for a variety of illnesses and disease processes – from anxiety, depression and stress, to the management of pain and enhancement of functioning after degenerative neurologic disorders.

(<https://www.northshore.org/healthy-you/9-health-benefits-of-music/>)



Achieving health through music

Lyrics remind us of a special moment, place and other transport us to pathways of power, joy and healing.

The Benefits of Music on health and well-being

It's heart healthy.

Research has shown that blood flows more easily when music is played. It can also reduce heart rate, lower blood pressure, decrease cortisol (stress hormone) levels and increase serotonin and endorphin levels in the blood.

It elevates mood.

Music can boost the brain's production of the hormone dopamine. This increased dopamine production helps relieve feelings of anxiety and depression.

Music is processed directly by the amygdala, which is the part of the brain involved in mood and emotions.

It reduces stress.

Research has found that listening to music can relieve stress by triggering biochemical stress reducers.

It relieves symptoms of depression.

When you're feeling down in the dumps, music can help pick you up - much like exercise.



It stimulates memories. There is no cure for Alzheimer's disease or dementia but music therapy has been shown to relieve some of its symptoms. Music therapy can relax an agitated patient, improve the mood and open communication in patients.

It manages pain.

By reducing stress levels and providing a strong competing stimulus to the pain signals that enter the brain, music therapy can assist in pain management.

It eases pain. Music can meaningfully reduce the perceived intensity of pain, especially in geriatric care, intensive care or palliative medicine.

It helps people eat less. Playing soft music in the background (and dimming the lights) during a meal can help people slow down while eating and ultimately consume less food in one sitting.

It increases workout endurance.

Listening to those top workout tracks can boost physical performance and increase endurance during a tough exercise session.

(<https://www.northshore.org/healthy-you/9-health-benefits-of-music/>)xt

MUSIC AS MEDICINE

Music therapy draws on the power of music in a therapeutic relationship to manage a range of conditions and improve your quality of life.

A music therapist tailor's session to your needs.

You may sing or play instruments, listen to music or discuss the meaning of lyrics. You don't need musical skills, and people of all ages can benefit.

(<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/treatments/8817-music->

Researchers are exploring how music therapy can improve health outcomes among a variety of patient populations, including premature infants and people with depression and Parkinson's disease.

(<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2013/11/music>)



Lyrics for the Soul

MUSIC AS MEDICINE

While music has long been recognized as an effective form of therapy to provide an outlet for emotions, the notion of using song, sound frequencies and rhythm to treat physical ailments is a relatively new domain, says psychologist Daniel J. Levitin, PhD, who studies the neuroscience of music at McGill University in Montreal.

A wealth of new studies is touting the benefits of music on mental and physical health. For example, in a meta-analysis of 400 studies, Levitin and his postgraduate research fellow, Mona Lisa Chanda, PhD, found that music improves the body's immune system function and reduces stress.

Listening to music was also found to be more effective than prescription drugs in reducing anxiety before surgery.

(Trends in Cognitive Sciences, April, 2013).
(<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2013/11/music>)

"We've found compelling evidence that musical interventions can play a health-care role in settings ranging from operating rooms to family clinics," says Levitin, author of the book "***This is Your Brain on Music***" (Plume/Penguin, 2007).

The analysis also points to just how music influences health. The researchers found that listening to and playing music increase the body's production of the antibody immunoglobulin A and natural killer cells – the cells that attack invading viruses and boost the immune system's effectiveness. Music also reduces levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

(<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2013/11/music>)

"This is one reason why music is associated with relaxation," Levitin says.

One recent study on the link between music and stress found that music can help soothe pediatric emergency room patients (JAMA Pediatrics, July 2013). In the trial with forty-two children ages 3 to 11, University of Alberta researchers found that patients who listened to relaxing music while getting an IV inserted reported significantly less pain, and some demonstrated significantly less distress, compared with patients who did not listen to music.

In addition, in the music-listening group, more than two-thirds of the health-care providers reported that the IVs were extremely easy to administer – compared with 38 percent of providers treating the group that did not listen to music.

(<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2013/11/music>)

"There is growing scientific evidence showing that the brain responds to music in very specific ways," says Lisa Hartling, PhD, professor of pediatrics at the University of Alberta and lead author of the study. *"Playing music for kids during painful medical procedures is a simple intervention that can make a big difference."*

Music can help adult patients, too. Researchers at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital in Singapore found that patients in palliative care who took part in live music therapy sessions reported relief from persistent pain (Progress in Palliative Care, July, 2013).

Music therapists worked closely with the patients to individually tailor the intervention, and patients took part in singing, instrument playing, lyric discussion and even song writing as they worked toward accepting an illness or weighed end-of-life issues.

(<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2013/11/music>)

BENEFITS OF SINGING

Decades of research has shown that singing individually and in groups is good for you on many levels. Here, according to science, are ten key benefits of raising your voice in song.

1. Relieves stress

Singing is a stress-reliever. A 2017 study measured the amount of cortisol, the stress hormone, in participant's saliva before and after they sang.

Researchers in that study found that the amount of cortisol was lower after singing, an indication that people felt more relaxed after they had belted out a tune.

They also found singing reduces stress levels whether the participants were singing in a group or by themselves.

There is a small catch, though: Cortisol only goes down if you are singing in a place that does not make you anxious.

A similar 2015 study evaluated salivary cortisol levels after a singing performance, finding that cortisol levels went up in this scenario.



2. Stimulates the immune response

There is some evidence that singing may boost your immune system and help you fight off illnesses.

A 2004 study by “**Trusted Source**” compared the effects of singing with the effects of simply listening to music. In two separate sessions, research subjects either sang or listened to music.

Those who sang showed higher levels of immunoglobulin A, an antibody your body secretes to help you fend off infections.

Listening to music (without singing along) reduced stress hormones but did not stimulate the body's immune system.

3. Increases pain threshold

When you sing in a group, whether it is a large choir or a smaller group, the act of collective singing causes your body to release endorphins.

This hormone can help promote positive feelings, and even change your perception of pain.

A 2012 study found that singing, drumming, and dancing in a group triggers the release of hormones that raise your pain tolerance in ways that just listening to music does not.

Researchers note that the feelings of social connection, rather than the music itself, seems to be behind the boost in pain tolerance.

4. May improve snoring

Regular singing may change the way you breathe, even when you are not singing. Researchers in a 2008 study interviewed the spouses of choir members, along with the spouses of people who do not sing. The researchers found that significantly fewer choir members snored. This led them to recommend regular singing as a potential treatment for snoring.

Studies have also shown that people who play wind instruments also snore less than the general population. These findings have prompted some experts to suggest that singing and playing wind instruments might be helpful for people with obstructive sleep apnea (OSA).

5. Improves lung function

Because singing involves deep breathing and the controlled use of muscles in the respiratory system, it may be beneficial for certain lung and breathing conditions.

Studies have shown that the breathing techniques used with singing may offer benefits for people with the following conditions:

- *Chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD)*
- *Asthma*
- *Cystic fibrosis*
- *Cancer*
- *Multiple Sclerosis*
- *quadriplegia*

While singing does not treat or cure any of these conditions, you may benefit from gaining strength in your respiratory muscles. Singing also increases the amount of oxygen in your blood, research shows. In addition to the pulmonary benefits, singers also experience improved mood and a greater sense of social connection.

6. Develops a sense of belonging and connection

When you sing together with others, you are likely to feel the same kind of camaraderie and bonding that player on sports team's experience. In one 2014 study Trusted Source involving 11,258 schoolchildren, researchers found that children in a singing and musical engagement program developed an intense sense of community and social inclusion. In a 2016 study involving 375 adult participants, researchers found that people who sang together in a group reported a higher sense of wellbeing and meaningful connection than people who sang solo.

One of the neurochemicals released when people feel bonded together is oxytocin, also known as the love hormone. Spontaneous, improvised singing causes your body to release this feel-good hormone, which may help give you a heightened sense of connectedness and inclusion.

7. Enhances memory in people with dementia

People with Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia experience a gradual loss of memory. Studies have shown that people with these conditions were able to recall song lyrics more easily than other words.

In one singing study conducted by **Trusted Source** for the Alzheimer's Foundation, participants said it was "nice to be able to remember something." However, the singers found they remembered more than just the lyrics. For some, singing familiar songs suddenly brought back life memories they'd forgotten, too.

Researchers found that singing songs learned at a younger age caused a spontaneous return of autobiographical details for many people.



8. Helps with grief

Singing in a group doesn't just help you with physical pain; it may also help with the emotional pain you feel after you've lost someone you love.

In a 2019 study conducted among people dealing with grief, researchers found that for those who sang in a choir, depression symptoms didn't get worse over time and their sense of wellbeing remained stable. In fact, the choir singers felt a gradual improvement in their self-esteem during and after the 12-week study. Those in the control group who didn't participate in the singing intervention didn't report this benefit. Researchers concluded that group singing may be a good option for people who need additional support during a time of grief.

9. Improves mental health and mood.

A 2018 study done in the United Kingdom evaluated 20 people in a singing program known as ***The Sing Your Heart Out*** project. The participants included people with mental health conditions, as well as the general public.

Researchers found that the participants reported improvements in their mental health, mood, sense of well-being, and feeling of belonging as a result of these singing workshops.

10. Helps improve speaking abilities

Decades ago, scientists began researching the effects of singing among people who have a hard time with speech due to a neurological condition.

To date, researchers at ***Trusted Source*** have found that singing improves the speaking ability for people with:

- autism
- Parkinson's disease
- aphasia following a stroke
- stuttering



Singing stimulates multiple areas of the brain at the same time.

This may enable people

with an impairment in one part of the brain to communicate using other areas of their brain.

Singing can also prolong the sounds in each word, which may make it easier to pronounce them.

Singing also makes it easier to incorporate hand-tapping, a method that can help people maintain speaking rhythms that are otherwise challenging.

(<https://www.healthline.com/health/benefits-of-singing>)

HOW MUSIC HEALS THE SOUL

Music is the universal language of mankind.
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

1 Samuel 16:23 in the Bible is an example of music used for healing: *"And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand: So, Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him"*. In this story, David plays the harp in Saul's bedroom to release him from evil spirits.

Music has long been used as a source of comfort and solace in times of distress. It can provide a sense of connection, support, and understanding during difficult moments. The history of music in healthcare has shown that music can reduce stress, anxiety, depression, and even chronic physical pain. Listening to calming music can help people relax and focus on the present moment.

Studies by scientists have also found that listening to music helps release endorphins –hormones associated with pleasure (and reducing pain) – which further reduces stress levels and may even aid in the healing process.

Music is often used in therapy sessions for this reason; it helps create an atmosphere and an emotion conducive to stress relief and healing emotional wounds. In addition to reducing stress levels, music can also be used as a form of self-expression or communication when words fail us.

<https://www.musicforthesoul.org/healing-music-guide/how-music-heals-the-soul-introduction/>

Listening to uplifting songs or singing along with them can help boost our moods by increasing serotonin levels in the brain – the neurotransmitter responsible for regulating our emotions and feelings of happiness or sadness.

Research has shown that listening to music can increase the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and reward. This release can lead to feelings of happiness and enjoyment, which are often accompanied by the release of endorphins. The study cited above by McGill University found that dopamine levels were higher when participants listened to music they enjoyed, indicating a strong link between music and the brain's reward system.

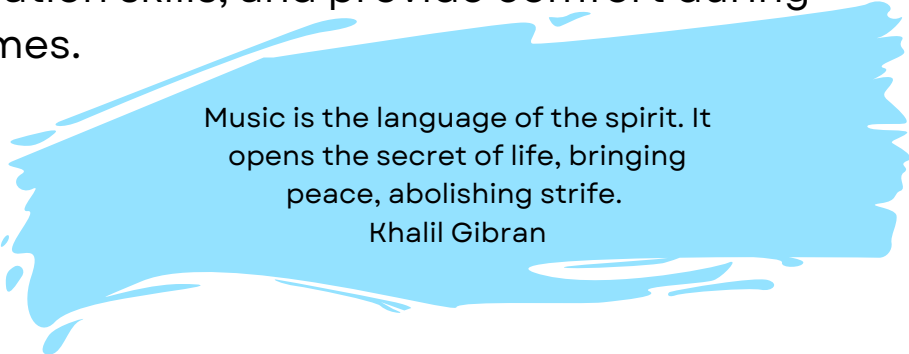
Research in the science of musical therapies has also suggested that certain types of music may improve cognitive function by stimulating areas in the brain related to memory recall and learn new skills faster than usual. Studies have shown that music can enhance connectivity between the auditory and emotional regions of the brain, which can facilitate memory encoding and recall.

Music is a powerful tool that can have a positive impact, bringing solace and joy to those facing difficult times.

The therapeutic benefits of music should not be overlooked.

Benefits of Music As Therapy

Music therapy is an evidence-based practice that uses music to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals. It has been found to be beneficial in a variety of settings including hospitals and hospices. Music therapy can help reduce pain levels, promote relaxation, improve communication skills, and provide comfort during difficult times.



Music is the language of the spirit. It
opens the secret of life, bringing
peace, abolishing strife.
Khalil Gibran

How Music Helps People Heal:

The Therapeutic Power of Music

Music Has Healing Power

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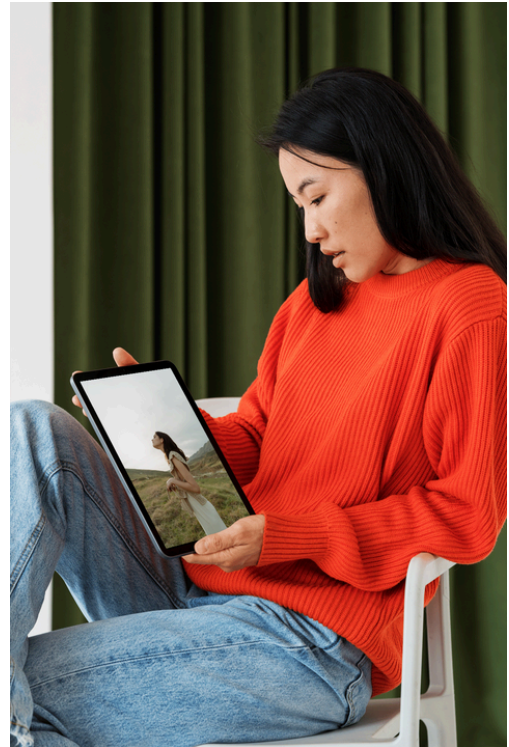
Healing

I will sing of your love and justice; to you, O Lord, I will sing praise. Psalm 101:1

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One-way music therapy can be used to reduce pain is through the use of rhythmical breathing techniques. These techniques involve the person focusing on a steady beat while taking slow deep breaths which helps relax the body and mind.

This type of intervention has been shown to decrease anxiety levels as well as lower heart rate and blood pressure which can lead to reduced pain levels overall.



Another benefit of music therapy is its ability to promote a state of relaxation by providing a distraction from stressful thoughts or feelings. Listening to calming music can help create a sense of peace and tranquility which may allow for more effective coping strategies when dealing with difficult emotions or situations such as those experienced in hospital or hospice settings.

Additionally, some research suggests that certain types of musical interventions may even have an analgesic effect due to their ability to activate endorphins in the brain which are natural pain relievers. For instance, a study published in ***Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*** found that music interventions promote high endorphin secretion, which contributes to pain relief by lowering blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate, oxygen consumption, and plasma lactate levels.

Music also provides opportunities for improved communication between patients and healthcare providers or family members who may not otherwise be able to communicate effectively due to language barriers or other issues related to illness or injury. For example, singing familiar songs together allows for shared experiences that build connections between people regardless of their similar backgrounds. Similarly, playing instruments together create moments where both parties feel heard without verbalizing their thoughts.

Finally, music provides comfort during challenging times by allowing us to access our innermost feelings in ways words cannot express. Listening to favorite songs can provide inspiration and bring back memories associated with them; it is like visiting old friends we have not seen in a while but still hold dear in our hearts. Music for hospice patients can be the difference between despair and delight.

The power these memories bring often leads us feeling connected to others around us despite any physical distance that might exist between them at the time. In this way, music serves as a bridge connecting two worlds – one filled with joy and sorrow – making it possible to heal emotional wounds no matter how deep they run. Music therapy has been proven beneficial for physical, mental, and emotional health. As such, it is an invaluable tool in helping people heal from various ailments. Next, we will explore how music can help heal emotional wounds.

How Music Can Help Heal Emotional Wounds

It can provide comfort and solace during times of distress, allowing us to express our feelings without having to put them into words. Music can also be used as a tool for self-reflection, helping us gain insight into our own experiences and find meaning in difficult situations.

Music has been found to be particularly beneficial for those who are grieving or suffering from trauma or PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).

Listening to certain types of music can evoke memories of happier times, providing a sense of hope and optimism even when faced with difficult circumstances. This kind of emotional healing is often accompanied by physical healing; studies have found that people who listen regularly experience improved sleep quality, lower blood pressure, reduced pain levels, and increased immune system functioning.

For those struggling with mental health issues such as depression or anxiety, music therapy may offer an effective form of treatment. A trained therapist will use musical activities such as singing or playing instruments in order to facilitate communication between patient and therapist while encouraging self-expression through sound exploration techniques like improvisation or songwriting exercises.

By exploring emotions through music rather than talking about them directly, it becomes easier for patients to open about their feelings without feeling judged or overwhelmed by negative thoughts or memories associated with the issue at hand.



Music can be a powerful tool for healing emotional wounds and a positive influence for restoring hope. By exploring how music can also help improve cognitive function, we may uncover even more benefits of its therapeutic effects.

How Music Can Help Improve Cognitive Function

Music has been used as a form of therapy for centuries, and its healing power is still being studied today. Music can help improve cognitive function in many ways, from improving memory to increase concentration.

Memory Improvement

Listening to music can help stimulate the brain and improve memory recall. Studies have shown that people who listen to classical music while studying are more likely to remember what they learned than those who don't listen to any music at all. This is because listening to certain types of music helps activate parts of the brain associated with learning and memorization. Listening to familiar songs can also trigger memories from past experiences, which may be beneficial for those suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

Concentration & Focus

The rhythm and melody of certain pieces of music can help focus attention on tasks that require concentration, such as reading or writing an essay. Instrumental tracks without lyrics are often best for this purpose since they won't distract you with words or singing voices like vocal-based songs might do. Classical works by composers such as Mozart, Beethoven, and Bach are particularly effective when it comes to aiding concentration due to their structured patterns and melodic progressions, which encourage mental clarity and focus on the task at hand rather than allowing your mind to wander off into daydreaming mode.

Stress Reduction

Music has long been known for its calming effects on both body and mind, making it an ideal choice when trying to reduce stress levels in high-pressure situations such as exams or job interviews where nerves could get the better of you. Listening to soothing sounds before taking part in these activities will not only relax your muscles but also clear away distracting thoughts so that you can stay focused on achieving success in whatever challenge lies ahead.

Music can be a powerful tool to help improve cognitive function and provide comfort, which is why it has been used in hospitals and hospices for many years. Let's explore the power of music in these environments further.

The Power of Music in Hospitals & Hospices

Music has been found to have powerful effects on the mental and physical health of patients in hospitals and hospices.

Studies show that music can reduce stress levels, improve moods, increase energy levels, reduce pain levels, and even speed up recovery time from illness or injury

For example, one study conducted at a hospital in England showed that playing classical music for cardiac surgery patients significantly reduced their anxiety levels compared to those who did not listen to music.

Another study found that listening to relaxing music before undergoing an MRI scan helped patients remain calm during the procedure.

Research suggests that listening to calming music can reduce stress and anxiety levels and help with pain management. A study conducted at a hospice facility in California showed that playing soothing instrumental pieces for end-of-life care patients resulted in decreased pain intensity ratings compared with those who did not listen to any type of musical intervention. The power of music is further evidenced by its ability to help improve cognitive function among hospitalized individuals.

Music therapy sessions have been shown to assist in improving memory recall and language comprehension skills among elderly stroke victims receiving rehabilitation services in a hospital setting.

Additionally, studies suggest that singing along with familiar songs may help people suffering from dementia remember words better than if they were simply asked questions about them without any accompanying melody or rhythm present.

Live musical visits are becoming increasingly popular for providing comfort and solace to both hospitalized patients and their families. Live musicians offer an opportunity for meaningful connection through song, which can provide much-needed emotional support during difficult times spent away from home due to medical treatments or end-of-life care services being provided elsewhere.

Services like **Harmony & Healing** can also provide music-based healing modalities.

Harmony & Healing's live Zoom musical visits by professional musicians serves as a way for patients to access some of their most cherished memories.



Harmony & Healing's **"Musical Memory Healing"** is a powerful adjunct to traditional music therapy. This form of entertainment helps break up long days spent inside hospital rooms while simultaneously bringing joy into otherwise stressful situations faced by many families visiting loved ones who are ill or nearing death's doorsteps.

Music is a powerful tool for healing, providing comfort and joy to patients, families and loved ones in hospitals and hospices. By offering live musical visits via Zoom, we can bring these benefits directly into the homes of those who need it most.



Key Takeaway: Music for healing has a powerful effect on physical and mental health. Studies show that it can reduce stress, improve moods, increase energy levels, decrease pain intensity ratings and even help with cognitive function. Live musical visits are becoming increasingly popular for providing comfort to both patients and their families during difficult times spent away from home due to medical treatments or end-of-life care services.

Live Musical Visitations for Patients & Families

Music has the power to bring joy and comfort to those who are struggling with illness or grief. Harmony & Healing's live musical Zoom visits offer an opportunity for patients and families to connect through music in a safe environment. These visits provide an uplifting experience that can help brighten up even the darkest of days.

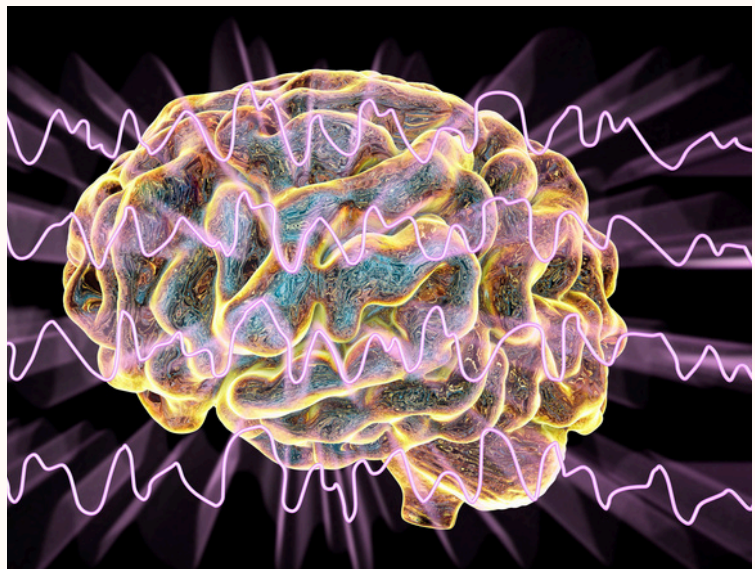
(<https://www.harmonyandhealing.org/how-music-helps-people-heal/>)

MUSIC AND THE BRAIN **ACTIVATING THE BRAIN**

The process by which we're able to perceive a series of sounds as music is incredibly complex, Silbersweig and BWH psychiatry colleague Samata Sharma, MD, explained in a 2018 paper on the neurobiological effects of music on the brain. It starts with sound waves entering the ear, striking the eardrum, and causing vibrations that are converted into electric signals. These signals travel by sensory nerves to the brainstem, the brain's message relay station for auditory information. Then they disperse to activate auditory (hearing) cortices and many other parts of the brain.



It is noteworthy that different parts of the brain are activated, depending on the type of music—for example, melodic versus dissonant—and whether we are listening, playing, learning, or composing music (see related box). Music can alter brain structure and function, both after immediate and repeated exposure, according to Silbersweig. For example, musical training over time has been shown to increase the connectivity of certain brain regions. “If you play an instrument like the violin,” he said in a recent Zoom interview, “the areas in your brain that are associated with the frequencies of the violin are more stimulated and the synaptic connections are richer.”



Healing Power of Music

These changes in brain circuitry and connectivity suggest opportunities to activate certain regions to promote healing, Silbersweig says. He and Haddad look forward to using cutting-edge brain research to build on what's already known about the therapeutic power of music for patients with dementia, depression, and other neurological conditions.

The pair note, for instance, that playing a march or other rhythmic piece for people with Parkinson's disease stimulates the brain circuits that get them physically moving.

Similarly, people with short-term memory loss from Alzheimer's disease often recognize familiar songs like "Happy Birthday" because those memories encoded into their brain's long-term memory," Haddad notes.

Haddad witnessed this response during high school and college while performing for patients in hospitals and assisted living facilities. *"You have these patients who are essentially sedated, lying down, eyes closed, not able to communicate,"* she recalls. *"And when you play a song that they recognize from their youth, their eyes light up. They're sitting up, and they're smiling. It's just incredible."*

Brain Areas: Working in Concert

We may not realize it when listening to a favorite tune, but music activates many different parts of the brain, according to Harvard Medical School neurologist and psychiatrist David Silbersweig, MD.

These include:

- *The temporal lobe, including specific temporal gyri (bulges on the side of the brain's wrinkled surface) that helps process tone and pitch.*
- *The cerebellum, which helps process and regulate rhythm, timing, and physical movement.*
- *The amygdala and hippocampus, which play a role in emotions and memories.*

Various parts of the brain's reward system.

“All of these areas,” Silbersweig noted in a 2018 paper, “must work in concert to integrate the various layers of sound across space and time for us to perceive a series of sounds as a musical composition.”

(<https://hms.harvard.edu/news-events/publications archive/brain/music-brain>)

Music and Words

One thing that can be said with confidence is that music is, and has always been, an integral part of any society. Try to imagine a world with no music: no first dances at weddings, no stereo or iPod to accompany your commute to work, no soundtrack supporting a movie, no stadium concerts or coffee shop serenades, and no singing around a campfire. If it seems impossible to imagine, that is because we have never, in the documented history of humanity, been without music (Levitin, 2006).

Music is ubiquitous; in any human society imaginable, music is most likely present (MacDonald et al., 2012), including every human gathering from celebration to grief and sporting events to weddings.

Music accompanies (pun intended) events across cultures. Emotional response to music – both positive and negative – affects a large enough portion of the population that it might be harnessed as a public health intervention because music is so accessible (Västfjäll et al., 2012). Victor Hugo said, “*Music express-es that which cannot be put into words and cannot remain silent.*” But music on its own is, for the most part, a combination of notes and spaces. What if the music has words?

The research shows that music and words can impact our emotional state. What can be said about the combination of music and words? This was the challenging part of my research. Lyrics are not studied as frequently as music, although they are often partnering (Juslin, 2005). There have even been studies on the relationship between language and music and how music can bolster language through various avenues.

(<https://www.mappmagazine.com/articles/a-case-for-lyrics-and-how-they-impact-our-emotions>)

Songs and the Civil Rights Movement

Music and singing played a critical role in inspiring, mobilizing, and giving voice to the civil rights movement. *“The freedom songs are playing a strong and vital role in our struggle,”* said Martin Luther King, Jr., during the Albany Movement. *“They give the people new courage and a sense of unity. I think they keep alive a faith, a radiant hope, in the future, particularly in our most trying hours”* (Shelton, “Songs a Weapon”).



The evolution of music in the black freedom struggle reflects the evolution of the movement itself. Calling songs “the soul of the movement,” King explained in his 1964 book ***Why We Can’t Wait*** that civil rights activists “sing the freedom songs today for the same reason the slaves sang them, because we too are in bondage and the songs add hope to our determination that ‘We shall overcome, Black and white together, We shall overcome someday’” (King, *Why*, 86).

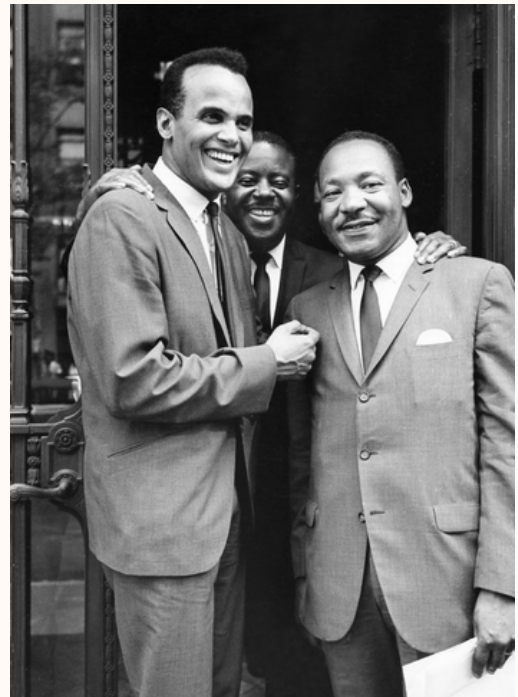
“We Shall Overcome,” a song with its roots in the Highlander Folk School during the labor struggles of the 1940s, became the unofficial anthem of the movement. Wyatt Tee Walker, executive director of King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference, said, “One cannot describe the vitality and emotion this one song evokes across the Southland.

I have heard it sung in great mass meetings with a thousand voices singing as one; I've heard a half-dozen sing it softly behind the bars of the Hinds County prison in Mississippi; I've heard old women singing it on the way to work in Albany, Georgia; I've heard the students singing it as they were being dragged away to jail. It generates power that is indescribable" (Carawan, 11).

Professional singers such as Mahalia Jackson and Harry Belafonte were early and consistent supporters of civil rights reform efforts, but group singing was the most prominent music in the movement. As a community-based campaign led by church leaders, the music of the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955–1956 consisted of Baptist and Methodist hymns and traditional Negro spirituals.

As King recalled in his memoir of the boycott, *Stride Toward Freedom*, "One could not help but be moved by these traditional songs, which brought to mind the long history of the Negro's suffering" (King, *Stride*, 86). In contrast, beginning with the sit-in movements of 1960, black students throughout the South began to take leadership roles in the broader movement.

The songs of campaigns led by student activists moved beyond traditional church music. Younger activists made up new lyrics, giving new life to many traditional songs. In the 1961 Freedom Rides songs played a critical role in sustaining morale for those serving time in Mississippi's Hinds County Jail.



.James Farmer, national director of the Congress of Racial Equality and a Freedom Ride participant, recalled one night when a voice called from the cell block below to the freedom riders: “*Sing your freedom song.*” We sang old folk songs and gospel songs to which new words had been written, telling of the Freedom Ride and its purpose” (Wexler, 134). The female freedom riders in another wing of the jail joined in, “*and for the first time in history, the Hinds County jail rocked with unrestrained singing of songs about Freedom and Brotherhood*” (Wexler, 134).

For many on the staff of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the protests in Albany, Georgia, proved an important training ground in which to learn the techniques for mobilizing the dormant black populace of the Deep South. Perhaps of greatest importance, they became more aware of the cultural dimensions of the black struggle, quickly recognizing the value of freedom songs to convey the ideas of the southern movement and to sustain morale.

Bernice Reagon, an Albany student leader who joined SNCC’s staff, described the Albany Movement as “a singing movement.” Singing had special importance at mass meetings, Reagon observed: “*After the song, the differences among us would not be as great*” (Reagon, “In Our Hands”).

<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/songs-and-civil-rights-movement>

- 93% of young people rely on music lyrics as “therapeutic tool”, study finds
- 93% of young people treat music lyrics as a “therapeutic tool” when struggling with their mental health, new research by Youth Music has revealed.



Reagon was probably best known as the founder of the internationally renowned African American female a cappella group Sweet Honey in the Rock, which she led from 1973 until her retirement in 2004. Reagon passed away in 2024

The UK's leading youth music charity surveyed a group of 16-24 year old in an attempt to better understand the role of creativity in young people's wellbeing. It follows on from the organization's 2021 Self-Expression report which evidenced the link between songwriting, self-expression and wellbeing in young people. In the aftermath of the pandemic and with the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis, young people's mental health is being increasingly affected, causing them to turn to coping mechanisms.

Findings from Youth Music's new research demonstrated that those aged 16-24 found that listening to, reading, or writing lyrics enables them to process difficult feelings and emotions (73%), and helps to reduce feelings of isolation or loneliness (54%). Furthermore, the survey revealed that twice as many young people feel that engaging with lyrics in some form helps to reduce feelings of isolation or loneliness compared with older generations (54% for 16-24s vs. 22% for over 55s).

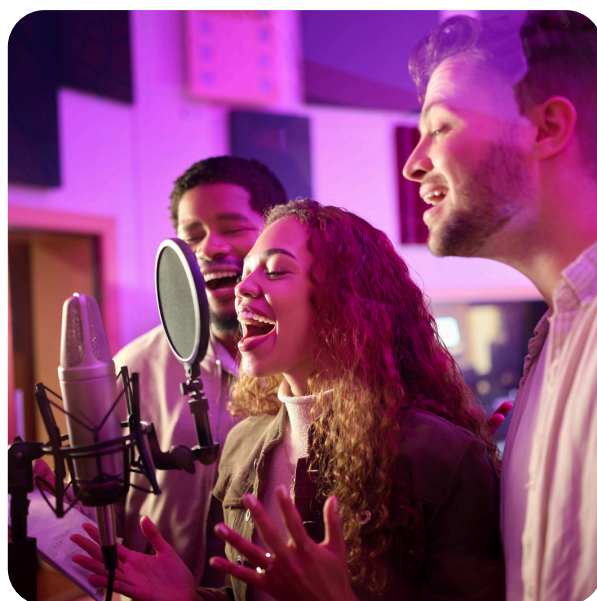
<https://djmag.com/news/93-young-people-rely-music-lyrics-therapeutic-tool-study-finds>

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VA Music Therapy: Healing and Connecting

Creative art therapists and Veterans at Battle Creek VA are using their musical skills to help veterans navigate mental and physical challenges. This unique program also offers a path for veterans to connect with others even when it is non-verbal.



Creative arts therapies are part of VA's Recreation Therapy Service and are direct care programs that include art, dance and movement, drama and music.

Battle Creek VA has worked with nearly 500 Veterans in outpatient, inpatient mental health and residential programs throughout 2023.

Music therapy includes opportunities for veterans to perform as a group *"Music therapists go through specific training in order to know when to intervene, when and what songs to play or what non-verbal cues to look for in this type of therapy,"* said Taylor Fox, recreational arts therapist. *"I think what sets us apart is the clinical application of music to address challenges."*

Music therapy's 70-year history in the military covers the entire continuum of care among service members, Veterans and their families. It is a vital part of treatment currently delivered in military treatment facilities and VA medical centers across the country by board-certified music therapists.

<https://news.va.gov/127722/va-music-therapy-healing-and-connecting/>

It Is Well With My Soul

"It Is Well with My Soul" is a hymn penned by hymnist Horatio Spafford and composed by Philip Bliss. After suffering the loss of his children, Spafford wrote this beautiful hymn as a testament to the salvation he found in Jesus through the good and bad times in life. How blessed it is that even in times of hardship and sorrow we can look to Christ and say, *"It is well with my soul."*

It Is Well With My Soul Lyrics

When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say
It is well, it is well, with my soul
It is well
With my soul
It is well, it is well with my soul
Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul
It is well (it is well)
With my soul (with my soul)
It is well, it is well with my soul
My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, o my soul
It is well (it is well)
With my soul (with my soul)
It is well, it is well with my soul
It is well (it is well)
With my soul (with my soul)
It is well, it is well with my soul





Dr. Sonara, a native of Hattiesburg, Mississippi is a Recording Artist, author, lifetime credentialed teacher, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Consultant, Toastmasters Silver and the owner of SCB Consulting, a training and development company which focuses on personal and professional wellness.



She has a BS degree in Human Ecology; MS degree in Psychology and a PhD degree in Expressive Arts Therapy (specialization in Psychology).

Dr. Sonara conducted interviews on the Katrina survivors in Mississippi and Louisiana for her doctoral research. She has served as advisor for the local AFSCFME Union President for the past 2 years.

Dr. Sonara created a National Healing Music Project and sent to the Obama Administration as a contribution to President's well-being initiative.

She is passionate about Holistic Strategies and obtained is a certified member of the National Council for Mental Well-being. Dr. Sonara's published articles can be seen on the Self-growth platform.

Dr. Sonara is working on a book titled, "Music for Personal Wellness". She speaks at conventions, conferences, non-profits, government and small groups.

Dr. Sonara lives by the philosophy, "the more we invest in the lives of others, the less we will be required to pay later".



Top 200 Greatest Black Gospel Songs of All Time
Collection With (Lyrics)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sFZTXPapyg>



Music is the universal
language of mankind.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



Elder Denise L. White
Co-Founder

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