

ROLE OF MUSIC IN MINIMISING STRESS LEVEL

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Music can affect the body in many health-promoting ways, which is the basis for a growing field known as music therapy. However, you can use music in your daily life and achieve many stress relief benefits 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 it really doesn't take time away from your busy schedule. Music provides a wonderful backdrop for your life and you can find increased enjoyment from what you're doing while reducing stress from your day.

When Getting Ready in the Morning

You can wake yourself up with music and [start your day feeling great](#). By selecting the right music, you can set the tone for a lower-stress day.

Classical or instrumental music can help you wake up while keeping you calm and focused. If you have a big, busy day ahead that requires extra energy, try something that's upbeat and makes you want to dance and smile.

During a Commute

- It can relieve some of the tension you feel from the commute itself and the day so far.
- It can help you feel less like you're wasting time in traffic and more like you're having some nice time to yourself.
- It can take your mind off of all that you need to get done once you reach your destination. You will arrive less stressed and more prepared to take on what awaits you.

Cooking

[Good nutrition](#) is an important part of a healthy lifestyle and it can actually keep your stress level down. [Eating at home](#) is a great way to ensure healthy meals and less expensive, but many people find themselves too tired to cook once they get home. If you put on some smooth jazz or a similar genre of music that you enjoy, cooking becomes a fun activity rather than a chore. You will likely find yourself relaxed and in a better frame of mind once dinner starts, which can enable you to savor your dinner and your company as you eat.

While Eating

Music can also be a helper as you're eating your meal. Soothing music can trigger the [relaxation response](#), which can lower [cortisol](#) levels, making it easier to digest food. classical music can help you eat less, digest better and enjoy your food more¹.

Cleaning

Keeping a simple, organized home can really help to [cut down on your stress level](#), but cleaning itself is a chore that many busy people don't have the energy to face after a long day. However, if you throw on some energetic music (hip-hop or pop, for example) you can raise your energy level and have fun as you clean.

When Paying Bills

We all need to pay bills, but the job doesn't always take a high degree of concentration. Playing music while you write your checks can help take your mind off of [financial stress](#) you may be feeling and make the task more enjoyable.

Before Bed

[Getting enough sleep](#) is important for proper functioning, and getting enough sleep can help you handle stress better. Unfortunately, [stress can also interfere with sleep](#) in several ways.

Listening to music can have a tremendously relaxing effect on our minds and bodies, especially slow, quiet classical music. This type of music can have a beneficial effect on our physiological functions, slowing the pulse and heart rate, lowering blood pressure, and decreasing the levels of stress hormones. Music, in short, can act as a powerful [stress management tool](#) in our lives.

As music can absorb our attention, it acts as a distraction at the same time it helps to explore emotions. This means it can be a great aid to meditation, helping to prevent the mind wandering.

When people are very stressed, there is a tendency to avoid actively listening to music. Perhaps it feels like a waste of time, not helping to achieve anything. But as we know, productivity increases when stress is reduced, so this is another area where you can gain vast rewards. It just takes a small effort to begin with.

To incorporate music into a busy life, try playing CDs in the car, or put the radio on when in the bath or shower. Take portable music with you when walking the dog, or put the stereo on instead of the TV. A person with [clinical depression](#) or [bipolar disorder](#) might listen to music to help with their worst, lowest moods.

Singing (or shouting) along can also be a great release of tension, and karaoke is very enjoyable for some extroverts! Calming music before bedtime promotes peace and relaxation and helps to induce [sleep](#). It is an important area of [therapy](#) for stress management. Music therapy can make use of biofeedback, guided imagery, and other established techniques to play an important role in the treatment of people with stress-related disorders. But due to the dramatic effects music can have, a trained and knowledgeable music therapist always is required.

When used in combination with biofeedback techniques, music can reduce tension and facilitate the relaxation response. It may be more compatible with relaxation than verbal stimuli, which may be distracting — music is processed mainly in nonverbal areas of the brain.

Music may help people to identify and express the feelings associated with their stress. In a music therapy session, the client can express these emotions, providing an important cathartic release.

Producing music in an improvisational way, and discussing pieces of music and lyrics in a group, can also help us become more aware of our emotional reactions and share them constructively with the group.

Music's form and structure can bring order and security to disabled and distressed children. It encourages coordination and communication, so improves their quality of life. Listening to music on headphones reduces stress and [anxiety](#) in hospital patients before and after surgery. Music can help reduce both the sensation and distress of both chronic pain and postoperative pain. Listening to music can relieve [depression](#) and increase self-esteem ratings in elderly people. Making music can reduce burnout and improve mood among nursing students. Music [therapy](#) significantly reduces emotional distress and boosts quality of life among adult cancer patients.

Meditation

Certain music is appropriate for meditation as it can help the mind slow down and initiate the relaxation response. However, not all peaceful or “New Age” music works for everyone. Music with no structure can be irritating or even unsettling. Gentle music with a familiar melody more often is comforting. But search around to find what produces a sense of calm, familiarity, and centeredness for you as an individual.

The sounds of nature often are incorporated into CDs made specifically for relaxation. For example, the sound of water can be soothing for some people. It can help conjure up calming images such as lying beside a mountain stream on a warm spring day. Birdsong may also be of use as an aid to help your mind slow down and release stressful thoughts.

Power of Music

It is a well-established fact that music can alter our mood, stir emotions and may even lead us to behave in unusual ways. There are many ways that music can make us feel, including:

1. Patriotic- national anthems and other music associated with a country or geographic area.
2. Loyalty- music and sounds associated with sports events, schools, clubs and other organisation.
3. Spiritual- hymns, chants, gospel and other music and sounds associated with religion or the divine.
4. Nostalgic- Music can remind us of the past, both good times and bad times.
5. Love- music can be used to express love and as a sign of affection.
6. Hate- music can be used in war and violence and to promote anger.
7. Energetic- rhythms in music can make us tap our feet, clap our hands and dance. Music can aid physical exercise.
8. Happy- music can lift our mood, make us smile, laugh and sing along.
9. Sad- music can make us feel melancholy, gloomy or even depressed. Music can make us cry.
10. Excited- music is often used to excite us, like at a funfair or during some tense moment in a movie.

11. Irritated- music we do not like can irritate us, as can an 'ear- worm' a tune that gets stuck in your head and is repeated over and over.
12. Unexplained- sometimes music can cause more explained physical reactions, like the hairs standing up on the back of your neck or goose bumps which are more commonly associated with strong feelings of nostalgia, pleasure, euphoria, astonishment or awe.

If you are stressed about something then it is likely that your problems, worries and concerns occupy a lot of your brain time making you tired and irritable- classic symptoms of stress. Music can offer a healthy and low cost escape, lifting your mood and may be even making you smile.

Some ways to enjoy music:

- Fully relaxing- try using the basic relaxation techniques outlined on our Relaxation Techniques main page. Use head phones or noise reducing in ear buds to listen to some soothing music. Set the volume at a comfortable level for you, neither too loud nor too quiet. Relax and concentrate on listening to the music.
- Overcoming a fear- a good example of this is on an aeroplane. Many people have certain anxieties about flying, especially during take off and landing. Use your headphones or ear- buds and close your eyes or use an eye mask choose some soothing music to help you overcome your fear. Remember your fellow passengers, the noise of the plane may cancel out a lot of your music but being able to hear somebody else's headphones can be very annoying.
- Overcoming frustration- being stuck in traffic, especially if you are running late for work or another appointment is, as you will know if it has ever happened to you, very frustrating. Try putting some of your favourite music on in the car (when appropriate)- turns the volume up and sing or hum along. This can be a great way to alleviate the stress of such situation.
- While you exercise- exercise itself is a good stress reliever and can help your mind relax- your endorphin levels increase while your stress hormone levels decrease. Exercising to music can help take your mind away from the fact you are exercising, especially if you find it boring or physically hard, so you actually get a better workout. If you have ever been to the gym you will notice how most people exercise to music. Pick music with a beat that matches

the rhythm of your exercise, if you concentrate on the music your body will slip into a rhythm and you will achieve your goals more easily.

- Whenever is appropriate- try listening to your music more frequently, whenever you can and is appropriate to your surroundings.

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