

RELEASING STRESS THROUGH THE POWER OF MUSIC

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Introduction

Music is an art form and cultural activity; whose medium is sound. General definitions of music include common elements such as pitch, rhythm, dynamics and the sonic qualities of timbre and texture. Vocal or Instrumental sounds or both combined in such a way as to produce beauty of form, harmony, and expression of emotion. Music 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 does not take time away from your busy schedule. Music provides a wonderful backdrop for your life and you can find increased enjoyment from what you are doing while reducing stress from your day. Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. Stress is your body's reaction to a challenge or demand. In short bursts, stress can be positive, such as when it helps you avoid danger or meet a deadline. But when stress lasts for a long time, it may harm your health. Stress is a normal feeling. There are two main types of stress-Acute stress. This is short-term stress that goes away quickly. You feel it when you slam on the brakes, have a fight with your partner or ski down a steep slope. It helps you manage dangerous situations. It also occurs when you do something new or exciting. All people have acute stress at one time or another. Chronic stress- this is stress that lasts

for a longer period of time. You may have chronic stress if you have some problems, an unhappy marriage or trouble at work and any type of stress that goes on for weeks or months is chronic stress. You can become so used to chronic stress that you don't realize it is a problem. If you don't find ways to [manage stress, it may lead to health problems.](#)

Human body reacts to stress by releasing hormones. These hormones make your brain more alert, cause your muscles to tense, and increase your pulse. In the short term, these reactions are good because they can help you handle the situation causing stress. This is your body's way of protecting itself.

Music and Stress

The human history in every society around the world, music has allowed people to express their feelings and communicate with others. More than simply expressing emotions, music can alter them; as British dramatist William Congreve put it in 1697, "Music has charms to soothe a savage breast."

A study from New York examined how music affects surgical patients. Forty cataract patients with an average age of 74 volunteered for the trial. Half were randomly assigned to receive ordinary care; the others got the same care but also listened to music of their choice through headphones before, during, and immediately after the operations. Before surgery, the patients in both groups had similar blood pressures; a week before the operations, the average was 129/82 millimetres of mercury (mm Hg). The average blood pressure in both groups rose to 159/92 just before surgery, and in both groups, the average heart rate jumped by 17 beats per minute. But the patients surrounded by silence remained hypertensive throughout the operation, while the pressures of those who listened to music came down rapidly and stayed down into the recovery room, where the average reduction was an impressive 35 mm Hg systolic (the top number) and 24 mm Hg diastolic (the bottom number). The listeners also reported that they felt calmer and better during the operation. The ophthalmologic surgeons had no problems communicating with their patients over the sound of the music, but the researchers didn't ask the doctors if their patients' improved blood pressure readings made *them* more relaxed as they did their work. Earlier research, though, found that surgeons showed fewer signs of stress and demonstrated improved performance while listening to self-selected music.

A study of 80 patients undergoing urologic surgery under spinal

anaesthesia found that music can decrease the need for supplementary intravenous sedation. In this trial, patients were able to control the amount of sedative they received during their operation. Patients who were randomly assigned to listen to music needed less calming medication than those assigned to listen to white noise or to the chatter and clatter of the operating room itself.

In the cataract and urologic surgery studies, the patients were awake during their operations. But a study of 10 critically ill postoperative patients reported that music can reduce the stress response even when patients are not conscious. All the patients were receiving the powerful intravenous sedative propofol, so they could be maintained on breathing machines in the intensive care unit (ICU). Half the patients were randomly assigned to wear headphones that played slow movements from Mozart piano sonatas, while the other half wore headphones that did not play music. Nurses who didn't know which patients were hearing music reported that those who heard music required significantly less propofol to maintain deep sedation than those patients wearing silent headphones. The music recipients also had lower blood pressures and heart rates as well as lower blood levels of the stress hormone adrenaline and the inflammation-promoting cytokine interleukin-6.

Neither of the operating room studies specified the type of music used, while the ICU trial used slow classical music. An Italian study of 24 healthy volunteers, half of whom were proficient musicians, found that tempo is important. Slow or meditative music produced a relaxing effect; faster tempos produced arousal, but immediately after the upbeat music stopped, the subjects' heart rates and blood pressures came down to below their usual levels, indicating relaxation.

Music can have a profound effect on both the emotions and the body. Faster music can make you feel more alert and concentrate better. Upbeat music can make you feel more optimistic and positive about life. A slower tempo can quiet your mind and relax your muscles, making you feel soothed while releasing the stress of the day. Music is effective for relaxation and stress management.

Researcher experiences with music and current findings indicate that music around 60 beats per minute can cause the brain to synchronize with the beat causing alpha brainwaves (frequencies from 8 - 14 hertz or cycles per second). This alpha brainwave is what is present when we are relaxed and conscious. To induce sleep (a delta brainwave of 5 hertz), a person may need to devote at least 45 minutes, in a relaxed position, listening to calming music.

According to the Stanford University research, "listening to music seems to be able to change brain functioning to the same extent as medication." They noted that music is something that almost anybody can access and makes it an easy stress reduction tool.

Some type of music reduces the stress like that cultural instruments, drums, and flutes are very effective at relaxing the mind even when played moderately loud. Sounds of rain, thunder, and nature sounds may also be relaxing particularly when mixed with other music, such as light jazz, classical and easy listening music.

Some music may relax you and some may not. Forcing yourself to listen to relaxation music that irritates you can create tension, not reduce it. It is important to remember that quieting your mind does not mean you will automatically feel sleepy. It means your brain and body are relaxed.

Listening to music reduces stress and anxiety, reduce both the sensation and distress of both chronic pain and postoperative pain, relieve depression and increase self-esteem ratings in elderly people, improve mood among students.

Music therapy significantly reduces emotional distress and boosts quality of life among adult. 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.

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.

Music has the potential to influence us both psychologically and physiologically, 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 effect's 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.

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