

Rebalance^{MD}

Music Therapy

Human beings have been creating and appreciating music for thousands of years. But did you know music therapy can provide meaningful relief of pain of osteoarthritis and other chronic pain, decrease symptoms of depression, and decrease preoperative anxiety by as much as some medications? Music has also been shown to enhance exercise capabilities and improve progression in physiotherapy.

Music has unique effects on our brain by stimulating many parts of our brain at the same time. Music impacts our hearing of course, but also stimulates our movement centres, frontal cortex, and emotional centres. It also stimulates both sides of the brain at the same time. Few other stimuli have such a wide-ranging impact on brain activity. Have a look at this TedEd presentation on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0JKCYZ8hng&list=RDQMhmWAus9K4SM&index=1>

Music therapy is a discipline in itself, and music therapists undergo special training to work with people with a variety of health issues. They utilize both active music therapy, where the person makes music themselves by singing or playing an instrument, or passive music therapy, where the person listens to music live or prerecorded.

Small studies on people with osteoarthritis show benefit in pain reduction from patients listening to music for as little as 20 minutes per day. Some clinicians advocate listening to music up to 4 hours per day.

If you are able to explore working with a music therapist directly, consider the Music Therapists Association of BC or the Victoria Conservatory of Music.

If you want to explore the benefits of music on your own, give it a try!

For pain relief, stress relief, and relaxation, studies show the most benefit from slow paced classical music that moves gently between high and low pitches. Perhaps any slow songs that you enjoy may help you. Try listening attentively to all the parts of the music while you allow your breathing to relax and your muscles to soften.

Here is one example of a relaxing music collection on

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxEj6m_7Qfk

If you are planning to increase your activity, consider making yourself a playlist of music you enjoy that tends to energize you. Try listening to your playlist while you are active. Remember to be self-responsible and increase your activity slowly as your body tolerates.

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During this strange time of self-isolation, consider further exploring your interest in music. Many performers are making online performances available. For example see Yo-Yo Ma Songs of Comfort on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrBOKHfvNSY>.

Some music streaming sites like Spotify, Apple Music and Google Play even have songs of comfort play lists.

Or maybe this is the time to pick up that instrument you haven't played for a while, order something to try, and take some virtual lessons.