



Factsheet

Music and Our Mental Health

Music can play a big part in our lives. Research¹ suggests that music can stimulate the body's natural feel good chemicals (Eg. endorphins, oxytocin), it can help energize our mood and even help us work through problems and provide an outlet for us to take control of our feelings. For example music can help us to²:

- Promote Wellness
- Manage Stress
- Express Feelings
- Enhance Memory
- Improve Communication
- Promote Physical Rehabilitation
- Alleviate Pain – Did you know that focussing on music reduces your brain's perception of pain?

Listening to music is a popular way to cope with difficult times, for example music can sometimes express how we are feeling or vent difficult thoughts and emotions for us. You may be able to relate to the music and find comfort from the words in a song.

By listening to music we may feel our mood or energy improve, but sometimes we may actually feel worse. So why is this and how can we try to ensure the way we use music has a positive effect on us?

What does your music do for you?

To find out how music affects you, try and become aware of the effect certain songs, styles, artists have on you. What does the music do for you? For example, some music may allow you to sit with a mood, explore it, understand it, but not feel worse from doing so.

Other music might help you change a mood, or set a new mood. This can be a helpful if it helps you bring your mood/emotions to a healthier space.

To discover the effect music has on you consider:

- Does the music allow you to sit with a mood, change a mood or set a new mood?
- Does it make you feel better or worse?
- Is it helpful to feel worse? When does it stop being helpful? For example rather than music having a calming effect on you, listening to it might make you feel more angry or anxious. When is it not helpful?
- Is it a certain style of music that is helpful or unhelpful or is it a certain artist or words in a song?

Managing our music

Once we are aware of how music affects us we can then start to intentionally select our music.

Many young people say that having their music on shuffle is not the best thing when they are having a tough time, instead being aware of their music choice and selecting songs or playlists that they know can help them cope in a positive way is more helpful.

By considering the questions listed above can help us work out which music would be on these playlists.

Why not have a go at creating a few playlists for different emotions i.e.

- Music to wake me up
- Music to energize me
- My happy music
- Music which vents my frustration for me etc

Listening to music, doesn't have to be the only way music can be helpful you may find singing or dancing along is the actual factor that has the positive effect, so try putting on some great songs to belt along to, or you may like listening to live music, or actually writing and playing your own music. The key is to become aware of how different music and use of music affects you.

By actively and intentionally selecting and using your music it can be a really helpful way to feel more in control of your feelings.

Prepared by Cheong-Clinch, Hense and Goulding 2012

1: Grape, C., Sandgren, M., Hansson, L.O., Ericson, M., & Theorell, T. (2003). Does singing promote well-being? An empirical study of professional and amateur singers during a singing lesson. *Journal of Integrative Physiological Behavioural Science*, 38, 1, pp. 65-74.
2: <http://www.musictherapy.org/>