

Mental Health Facts of Music

Did You Know?



- Listening to preferred music can help make positive shifts in mood
(Wooten, 1992)
- Brain scans show that listening to familiar and preferred music helps in regulating emotions by increasing the use of brains areas that monitor and control thoughts, and decreasing emotional reactivity
(Sena Moore, K., 2013)
- Relaxing music – as defined by minimal, consistent, and slower-tempo songs – decreases blood levels of cortisol, which is a marker for stress
(Legge, 2015)
- Elements of music, such as a fast tempo or a loud sound, can trigger reflexes and arousal (such as wincing at a loud noise, or simply moving to the beat)
(Legge, A. W., 2015)
- When music is new, unexpected, or too complex, the brain is constantly emotionally processing and assessing the music
(Sena Moore, K., 2013)
- Music listening has been linked to increased levels of oxytocin, an important peptide hormone involved with social connection and trust
(Legge, A. W., 2015)
- Music-produced “chills” are associated with dopamine release, a neurotransmitter involved with pleasure and helping to make new connections within the brain
(Hunt, A. M., & Legge, A. W., 2015, Stegemöller, 2014)
- Music that is repeatedly paired with positive or negative experiences can be classically conditioned to produce emotions
(Legge, A. W., 2015)
- Music listening, singing, and playing can increase alpha (relaxed state) brain waves
(Kwon, Gang, & Oh, 2013)
- Music listening decreases delta and beta brain waves – high delta waves often signal schizophrenia and high beta waves are often present in bipolar disorder
(Legge, A. W., 2015)
- Music listening, singing, and playing can help decrease negative symptoms of psychosis
(Tan, Yao, & Zheng, 1994; Silverman & Marcionetti, 2005)
- Music has been shown to reduce amygdala (emotional) hyperactivity caused by PTSD
(Olf *et al.*, 2014)

Music in My Life

Music listening, singing, and creating can be great coping tools if used in a healthy way. There are times, however, where music can become an unhealthy coping tool.

Healthy Uses:

- Listening to a “sad” or “angry” song in order to let out the emotions and then using your music choices to bring you to a calmer, or more positive state
- Listening to an upbeat song that gets you motivated to exercise, do work, or move
- Listening to music you find calming in order to relax or decompress
- Playing an instrument and/or singing as a fun leisure activity
- Engaging with family, friends, or peers in creating music or attending a live show

Unhealthy Uses:

- Repeatedly listening to songs that remind you of an emotionally difficult time, causing you to ruminate on difficult memories and intensify your negative mood state
- Listening to music that you associate with certain behaviors such as self-harm, suicidal thoughts, and substance use
- Using music listening as an excuse to isolate or avoid social interaction as opposed to using the music listening to take time for yourself and decompress
- Listening to over-stimulating music when your intent is to focus on a task

How do I use music in my life?

What may be some ways I am using music in an unhealthy way?

What are some healthy ways I can use music in my life?