

Chapter: 10

The power of music

Music has enormous effects on living beings, regardless of the species. Most every one of them sing, listen, and respond favorably to music they like. Mothers sing lullabies to infants to stop their crying and tantrums; sooth and lull them to peaceful sleep. The farmworkers hum and sing to relieve monotony; many believe that the plants grow better in a musical environment. The professional sports people and competitors listen to music to calm their minds to relieve anxiety; for relaxation & gaining concentration to help them perform at optimum levels. The birds chatter, animals mew; the river flows; the breeze swings the branches that flutter its leaves. There's music in them. There's music everywhere! It's universal, even divine. The believers chant, recite and sing to gods in praise, thanksgiving, and asking for blessings.

Strange it may seem, the brain has different pathways or channels for processing different parts of music components such as pitch, melody, rhythm, and tempo. Even subconsciously, our body systems respond accordingly by affecting heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, and physical movements. On hearing favorite tunes and music, the brain responds; actually releases a chemical called 'dopamine' that has positive effects on mood. Music has emotional content as well. The listeners feel varied types of emotions- joy, enthusiasm, optimism, nostalgia, sorrow, suspense, anguish, mystery, ambivalence, dread, horror, disappointment, etc. In many ways, it is potentially beneficial to good health and emotional well-being.

Music is a healthy option that people naturally use in various situations. Music is well liked for its entertainment and show-business values. But there are many other hidden values -added benefits to be mentioned:

- Listening to music engages several parts of the brain*
- Music builds reasoning skills and helps children learn and remember better. Nursery rhymes and children's songs are designed to reap those benefits!*
- Singing and/ or playing a musical instrument trains the brains. Its effects are long-lasting. People who have had music lessons in childhood are better able to decipher various musical components such as pitch, rhythm patterns, tempo, dynamics etc; tend to possess better listening*

skills which is a great attribute in education. They are more likely to do well in math, science, and reading. They become naturally gifted to better present their ideas in style and pleasing cadence (balanced, rhythmic flow, as of poetry, or oratory) and structure with proper modulation, voice control; intonation and effectiveness, as their perceptions are deeper as well as the mouth and tongue movements are better attuned; agile, and facile!

- *Music sets the mood; listening to music can benefit overall well-being, help regulate emotions, create happiness, and relaxation in daily life that is growing more and more hectic, and increasingly stressful.*
- *Reduces stress, anxiety & boredom. Listening to 'relaxing' music can reduce stress and anxiety. It's well known that stress hormone like "cortisol" inhibits physical and mental functioning.*
- *Improves work & exercise benefits by boosting mental and physical stimulation increasing endurance & performance.*
- *The repetitive components of rhythm and melody help our brains form patterns that benefit memory enhancements and help longer attention span. From computer sciences, we learn that the memory structure is in bits, bytes, and words! [music pattern is in tones of pitches, harmony, scales, phrases, intonation, cadence, tempo, dynamics, etc. creating various listening pleasure, and moods]*
- *Music is conducive to a wholesome mind and disposition. Music therapy is helpful in enhancing better blood flow, which is good for hearts and blood vessels. It improves communication skills, maintain expressive disposition, and in coping with feelings such as fear, anger, trauma, and despair. Music can be a consoling partner in loneliness.*
- *Music improves mental faculties and cognition. Listening to music help people to reconnect pieces or incoherent bits & bytes of memory, and data; sharpens alertness and presence of mind; communication, and thought process.*
- *Soothes and lull minds; increase prolonged periods of mental tranquility, focus, and concentration*
- *When the brain forms memories as in learning a new task, it encodes the new information by turning on connections between neurons. Neural communication takes place when electrochemical signals are transmitted from one neuron to a second neuron and spreading like dendrites (branched threadlike extensions of a nerve cell, which conduct impulses towards the cell body) Anything that helps the brain to be active is beneficial for health!*