

Sound Wisdom



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Dr. Bennett Flaum and Dr. Mitchell Flaum have just completed their new book on Diabetes; "how sweet it is: living & learning from diabetes".

The book is dedicated to all those willing to take the challenge of making the journey of self-exploration from illness into healing.



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In our ever-complex world, it is essential for our emotional and physical well-being that we create moments to escape for a while, relax and re-energize ourselves. The methods we choose to tune out the stress and find comfort may vary, from yoga or massage, to television or movie watching. For some, a mini-shopping spree or a martini may do the trick. However, one of the most soothing and refreshing things we can actually do is "tune in" to music.

If you were but to take just a brief moment, close your eyes, and listen to what is happening around you, what sounds do you hear? Is it chirping birds or honking horns? While we often are so busily engaged in our daily routines that we ignore these sounds, inevitably they do register in our brains and make an impact, resonating within us.

The ancients were well aware of the amazing power of sound to affect the body, mind, and soul. Indeed, many ancient traditions actually believed that the Universe itself was created by the vibrational emanations of some Primordial sound or breath. Music has thus become the basis of prayer and many ritual traditions across civilizations throughout history. It is found in all religions- in Christian and Jewish hymns, in Moslem chants, and in Buddhist mantras.

Music is a way for us to re-attune ourselves to the rhythms of nature. As such, it has been known by healers and shamans to soothe the mind and body. Thus, in the Bible we read of David playing a stringed instrument (lyre) to comfort the troubled spirit of melancholic King Saul. Interestingly, in Northern Middle English, the word *heal* means "to make sound."

The ancient Greeks were well-versed in the curative powers of music. In fact, the Greek God Apollo was known both as the God of Music as well as the God of Healing. One would thus venture to the Temple of Apollo to seek musical healing. Our modern day counterpart is the music therapist.

The fact that human beings are physically wired for sound should not seem surprising given that we are actually made up of subatomic particles that are constantly vibrating. Even the fetus suspended in the mother's womb appears to respond to sound vibrations from the outside world. It is therefore not surprising to find many expectant mothers nowadays choosing to sing or play music to their unborn child to ensure their healthy intellectual and emotional development and functioning in the future.

Indeed, some research findings suggest that more neural connections are created in the brains of unborn children exposed to music.

Scientific research has indeed demonstrated the broad range of effects of music on the body. Music can create shifts in our brain waves and help stimulate the production of endorphins, our body's natural chemical painkillers. Music can also affect our blood pressure, muscle tension, and heart rate, as well as help boost the immune system.

Music has been used to treat migraine headaches as well as to help facilitate verbal communication in persons suffering from conditions of brain deterioration such as Alzheimer's disease. It helps the elderly retrieve memories and provides a means of communication when spoken language is difficult. Music can also help you at work to alleviate fatigue and boredom, boost morale, and increase your energy and productivity.

Using music as a healing tool, however, need not be seen only as a passive listening experience. Often its value in refreshing us increases in relation to our dynamic involvement in its lush rhythms. Whether we sing along, stomp our feet, or tap our fingers in response to the beat, as we engage music, it resonates deep within us.

As you listen to the music, you may also be moved to make your own sounds to accompany the musical selection. Be brave and creative inasmuch as this technique has been found to be effective in helping the body find its own special healing vibrational patterns. In the process of using such "*sound wisdom*," you may actually discover the healing voice residing within you!

Finding the right music for your particular needs may require some experimentation and resourcefulness on your part. Music clearly affects each of us differently. Furthermore, different types of music may be required for different purposes-to calm or relax us, for example, or to energize and refresh us. So have fun on your journey as you rediscover the wonderful world of music, and delight in these pleasures on your own, or in the company of friends and family.

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