

## The Influence of Music on Mental Health

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### Abstract

The importance of music in our lives is significant. It changes our mood, helps us focus, and excites us. This paper is about the way music can help in reducing depression, anxiety, as well as ADHD. Research shows that music alters chemicals in the brain like dopamine and serotonin, making us better and more emotionally balanced. Different forms and genres of music have different effects on our brains. For instance, classical and calm music improves our sleep, while an energetic rock beat can increase activity levels. The author will share her personal experiences to show how music can be beneficial, especially to young people, and children. She will also discuss the minor adverse effects and consequences that music can have on a person suffering from depression and PTSD. Overall, this research suggests that mental health can be improved through music.

*Keywords:* ADHD, anxiety, depression, PTSD, mental health, mood, music

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### Introduction

Have you ever felt that classical music relaxes you? Or does rock music energize your mood? When you listen to your favorite music, does it cheer you up? This is true because music is such an inspiring force in our everyday lives, and it has a strong impact on our minds and general well-being. Music can change our mood, improve concentration and memory, and help us overcome difficult days.

In this paper, the author will discuss the impact of music on our minds, as well as how music helps people suffering from mental disorders like feeling down (depression), an overactive mind (anxiety) or lack of concentration, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

“Without music, life would be a mistake,” Friedrich Nietzsche (1899/1997) said, a statement the author shares. This research will demonstrate that music is not just for entertainment.

### Methods

Several different methods were used to explore how music can affect our mental health. A literature review encompassed articles in various

magazines, websites, experiments, and several books on the connection between music and the human mind. Additional information was sought from psychology websites. Conversations with family members, friends, and neighbors asked if they listen to music, and when they enjoy listening to music. When times are difficult? When they are happy or sad? Or when they need energy and need to focus?

It was helpful to have conversations with other people in order to recognize how music helps different people with different problems: for example, when they are down, or feeling anxious, or cannot concentrate. Moreover, I added my own experiences with music. I talked about the role of music in focusing while studying and also the role of music in those moments when I become sad, less motivated, or I am in a challenging, even exhausting, situation.

### Results

These days, mental health problems are common and are often caused by traumatic past experiences that have a negative impact on the mind. Psychologists have observed that trauma can

be healed through music, depending on the instruments used and the lyrics in the music. In “Musico philia,” Oliver Sacks (2007) writes that music causes the brain to produce chemicals such as dopamine and serotonin, which regulate mood and emotions. Such an effect may help in correcting brain dysfunction due to trauma.

Surveys show that listening to your favorite songs stimulates the release of pleasure chemicals in the brain, such as norepinephrine and melatonin. It may also reduce stress hormone production. However, it may make depression worse if one listens to sad, nostalgic music. Sacks (2007) documents a number of neurological injuries and diseases that have been successfully treated with music. Music therapy can treat various conditions including depression, autism, ADHD, PTSD, narcolepsy, insomnia, anxiety disorders, and Alzheimer’s disease. It helps with memory, high blood pressure, coping issues, stress reduction, and self-esteem (Sacks, 2007; Wilde & Welch, 2022).

Music is used by many individuals to improve their mood (Bayard et al., 2017; Cordi et al., 2019). For instance, listening to tranquil music can lessen anxiety and make you feel less apprehensive. Classical music is helpful for a friend, Ana, when she cannot sleep at night. She states it eases her mind and helps her fall asleep calmly. Ana also uses Reiki music during meditation sessions, which she feels help to eliminate negative energy, resulting in increased well-being.

Music often helps people with ADHD increase their attention span and focus better (Wilde and Welch, 2022). By playing their favorite songs, they can become more motivated and energetic. These experiences are supported by research in this field. A study conducted by the American Psychological Association established that children with ADHD perform much better on cognitive tasks while listening to music than while working in silence. One such study was “Music and Cognitive Performance in ADHD Children” (2006), which showed how music can help improve cognitive skills as well as enhance attention in children with ADHD. Another study carried out in 2012,

“Attention, Perception, & Psychophysics,” demonstrated that background music improved task performance along with memory recall among adults who had ADHD. These findings confirm that music can be a valuable tool through which individuals may control some symptoms associated with hyperactivity disorder such as enhancing concentration levels for them to attain high-level heteronomous activities. (Wilde & Welch, 2022).

A 2017 study by researchers at the University of Tehran found that playing a playlist of classical or motivational music an hour before bed for insomniacs (people who have sleep problems) made them fall asleep faster and wake up less often during the night. And in the morning they felt more cheerful than those who did not listen to music at all.

Similarly, music can also turn people’s thoughts to more positive and more peaceful ones. For example, people were inspired by the lyrics of John Lennon’s song “Imagine.” For decades, he sang this song about his vision of war, violence, and peace with millions of people around the world. The lyrics and melody of this song have inspired many people to reflect on the meaning of peace and the devastating effects of wars. It is another good example of the power of music to inspire people spiritually.

A 2014 study found that participants who listened to fast-rock and up-tempo music (such as energetic rock tunes by Muse and The White Stripes) performed better on physical tasks and felt more energetic than those who listened to calming music (North & Hargreaves, 2014). So, music can have two effects: classical music can relax people and help them sleep; and rock ‘n roll, pop, and hip-hop music can have extraordinary effects, motivating people to perform physical exercises better.

### My Personal Experience

Music is everything to me: rock artists such as David Bowie, The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, and Nirvana.

My story began at the age of 4 during the 2008 war when Russian soldiers invaded my country. Between the bombings, I found peace with music I found on a CD while I was in a bunker. The song was called “წვიმად გადავიქცე” (tsvimad gadaviketsi, I Turned into Rain); among others, it was my lullaby when I was miles from home and couldn't sleep. This scared me a lot, especially since my bear was not in the shelter and had been left in the city of Gori. So from a young age music has had a big impact on my sleep problems.

This experience highlights how influential music has been in my life. Music is one of the most important things in human life; we are naturally connected from birth. Lullabies, the songs that parents sing to their newborns, are evidence that music can connect people, even from our first day.

### Discussion

These examples and psychological research show that music has many positive effects on a person. Some music cures insomnia, other music helps people through difficult days, heals negative feelings caused by trauma, or improves concentration and motivation. Listening to music can evoke a range of emotions. Sometimes it helps us express our feelings. It also helps us overcome feelings of isolation and loneliness and can give rise to positive emotions.

However, there is a great deal of research about nostalgic or sad songs that is controversial. Some researchers believe that sad songs can soothe depressed people because they help maintain a sense of normalcy by being close to their emotions (Sonnenschein, Kapp, & Koenig, 2016). Another study conducted at the University of Berlin (Taruffi & Koelsch, 2014) found that sad music does not induce sadness, but instead induces nostalgia and calmness, a mix of emotions that can be effective for a person's mental health.

Other researchers and psychologists believe that sad music has negative consequences, especially for teenagers, as well as for those who are already depressed (Lonsdale & North, 2011). According to a study published in *Frontiers in Psychology*, people who think intensely or are prone to depression may experience heightened feelings of sadness after listening to sad music (Van den Tol & Edwards, 2015). They found this to be true for teenagers and young adults, who are more susceptible to mood disorders. Also, a study by the American Psychological Association called “Emotion” showed that depression is increased by sad music and prevents a person from getting out of the depression (Bernstein & McNally, 2017). Sad songs can worsen the mood of the individual as they enhance the sense of sadness and isolation. Moreover, they increase suicide in teenagers who have suicide-related thoughts or are suffering from depression or other mental diseases.

Some types of music can evoke negative emotions and memories in a person because of the lyrics or melody, which would be harmful to people who suffer from PTSD. In particular, loud music often has a negative effect on soldiers returning from war, because it recalls the loud memories of war. Let us say clearly that not every song produced is something that can positively affect people.

For music to positively affect a person, the genre must be carefully selected, which means the correct selection of its text and melody to suit a person's mental and emotional situation.

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### Author's Note



**Lia Sazandrishvili** prefers to be called Lika, since Lia is a name more suited for the older generation in Georgia. She is 20 years old and was born and raised in Gori, and lives here with her parents and one brother. In 2008 Gori was invaded by the Russian Army and when Lika was only 4 years old she experienced the trauma of being moved from one place to another to escape the bombing in the city. That experience left a significant mark on her and shaped how she sees things. She is now a third-year student in a Bachelor's degree program in English Philology at Gori State University.

In addition to her desire to become proficient in English, she has a passion for creative work. She designs different products and hopes to have a business of her own where she will be her own boss. She also has a great interest in psychology, psychiatry, and philosophy, and from an early age, she always thought she would become a psychiatrist. She is a big fan of rock music and often spends her free time reading. Her favorite author is Albert Camus and *The Myth of Sisyphus* is a piece that she is drawn to, an essay on the meaning of life. Camus' ideas about absurdity, love, and rebellion resonate with how she sees the world. She believes that every being on Mother Earth deserves to be treated with equality and respect.