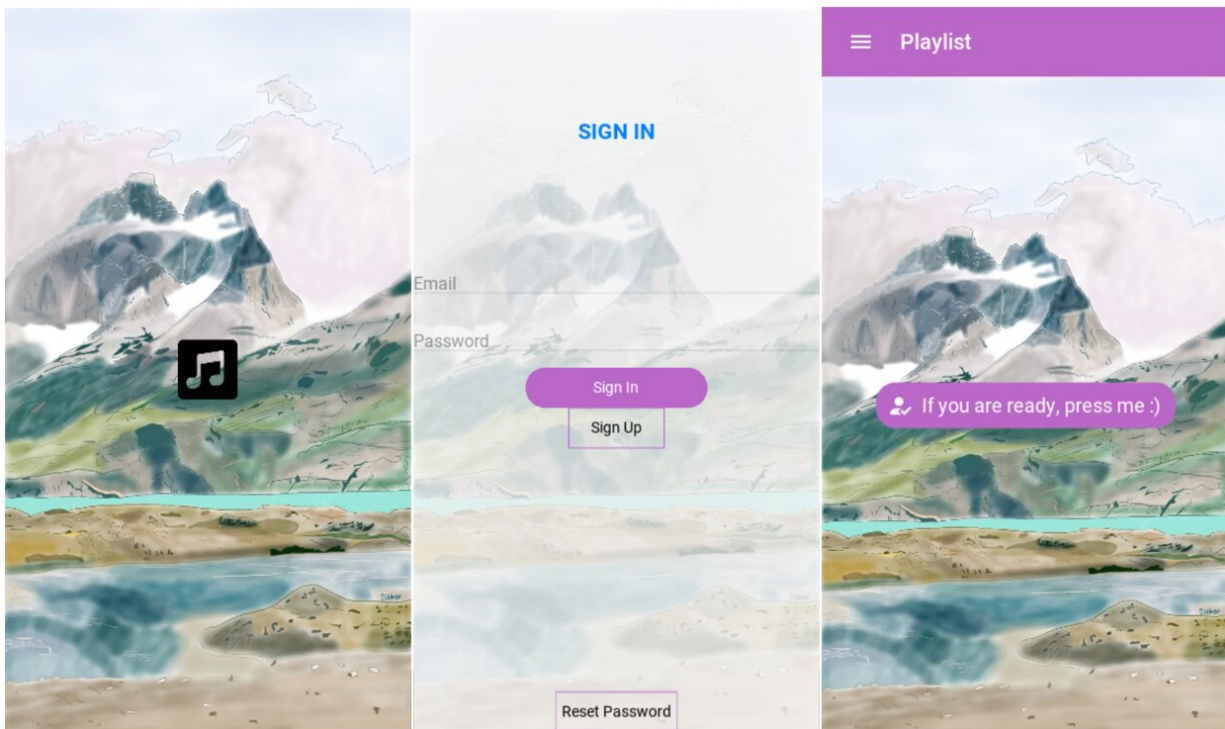


# Can a playlist be your therapist? Balancing emotions through music

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The Emotion Equalization App surveys your mood and energy to create a corresponding therapeutic playlist. Credit: Man Hei Law

Music has the potential to change emotional states and can distract listeners from negative thoughts and pain. It has also been proven to help improve memory, performance, and mood.

At the upcoming meeting of the Acoustical Society of America, Man Hei Law of Hong Kong University of Science and Technology will present an app that creates custom playlists to help listeners care for their emotions through [music](#). The presentation, "Emotion equalization app: A first study and results," will take place at the Grand Hyatt Nashville Hotel on Dec. 5, as part of ASA's 183rd meeting running Dec. 5-9.

"As humanity's universal language, music can significantly impact a person's physical and emotional state," said Law. "For example, music can help people to manage pain. We developed this app as an accessible first aid strategy for balancing emotions."

The app could be used by people who may not want to receive counseling or treatment because of feelings of shame, inadequacy, or distrust. By taking listeners on an emotional roller-coaster ride, the app aims to leave them in a more positive and focused state than where they began.

Users take three self-led questionnaires in the app to measure their emotional status and provide the information needed to create a playlist. Current emotion and long-term emotion status are gauged with a pictorial assessment tool that helps identify emotions in terms of [energy level](#) and mood. Energy level can run from high, medium, to low and mood can register as positive, neutral, or negative. A Patient Health Questionnaire and a General Anxiety Disorder screening are also used to establish personalized music therapy treatments.

By determining the [emotional state](#) of the user, the app creates a customized and specifically sequenced playlist of songs using one of three strategies: consoling, relaxing, or uplifting. Consoling music reflects the energy and mood of the user, while relaxing music provides a positive, low energy. Uplifting music is also positive but more [high energy](#).

"In our experiments, we found out that relaxing and uplifting methods can significantly move listeners from negative to more positive [emotional states](#). Especially, when listeners are at a neutral [mood](#), all three proposed methods can change listeners' emotions to more positive," said Law.

**More information:** [acousticalsociety.org/asa-meetings/](https://acousticalsociety.org/asa-meetings/)

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