

Tips for making music good medicine

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Music has been a part of humanity for as long as humanity has existed. Archeologists have unearthed relatively complex bone instruments greater than 40,000 years old. Certainly, human ancestors likely were making music in more rudimentary ways even before this. It is no surprise then that music is so fundamental to development as humans and their continued psychological well-being.

There's no doubt the COVID-19 pandemic and the difficulties people all have experienced this year have taken a toll on mental [health](#). Music is one tool to use ease the strain on your mental health, and help you to heal in the future.

No one can tell a person exactly how to enjoy [music](#). This is because music preferences are as unique as each person.

Music therapy is field of medicine where music is used to treat various conditions, much as a physical therapist might treat a patient. You can use some of their techniques to inspire your own healing and manage your mental health. These techniques are wide ranging. No matter your preferences for music, you can make activities like

these work for you.

Performing music often is more powerful than listening. If you have the skill, you should try to perform music. You don't need to be a classically trained musician, and you don't need an audience. Sure, you can sit down and play the piano, but belting out a tune in the shower or in your car likely is just as helpful. Whistling is performing music, too. Getting a group of people together outside, using [social distancing](#), to play kazoos, rarely ends without laughter, which also is powerful medicine. However you do it, find a way to make music.

Music has always been a social bonding activity. If you aren't comfortable making your own music, you can make listening more powerful by listening together. With quarantine, this takes creativity. Try listening to a song together on Facetime with a friend or playing music that you and a neighbor enjoy. If you and another person have a song that you share as your special song, call him or her ? or send them the song to listen to ? and then call and talk when the [song](#) is done. If you are quarantined together, listen together.

Music often is linked to some of our deepest and most resilient memories and emotions. If you are feeling down, think back to music you listened to during a happier time. Often this is music from your youth. Whatever this music is, listen to it, and it may lighten the mood.

In many cultures, music and dance are closely linked, so much so that one seems incomplete without the other. So listen or perform music and dance. Do it with a family partner in your home if you can, but alone will do, and you don't need an audience for this either. We all need to move more than we do, even in normal times. While stuck in quarantine, this is doubly true, and evidence shows that exercise also improves mental health. There are many ways ? and no wrong way ? to move with music. Many places are offering things like online movement and [dance classes](#), and other ways to move to music and connect to people online. You

don't need anything fancy. If you can find a way to hear music and move your body to it, then do it.

There are many other ways to fit music into your lives. Let my suggestions be motivation for your own creativity. Music has always been a refuge for people during the most difficult times, and it can certainly help during the COVID-19 pandemic.

So sing, dance, play and connect to make each day a little better.

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