

# Music Therapy: Music for Wellness Care

Your Wellness by KKU Academy – Reading Materials



## Learning Objectives :

1. Explain the meaning and scope of Music Therapy and distinguish it from casual music listening
2. Understand the basic mechanisms of stress (cortisol) and the rationale for how music supports mental wellness
3. Explain the mechanisms by which music affects the brain and body in general
4. Summarize the benefits of music therapy on physical, mental, social, and cognitive health
5. Practice slow breathing and humming activities for safe relaxation
6. Know precautions and basic criteria for when to consult a specialist

### Note:

This document is prepared for educational purposes and is not intended for diagnosis or as a substitute for treatment.

If you experience persistent stress/poor sleep/continuous anxiety, you should consult a specialist.

# 1. What is Music Therapy? And how is it different from casual music listening?

Music Therapy is the use of music and musical elements such as melody, rhythm, and harmony by trained music therapists to achieve individualized goals in physical, emotional, social, and cognitive domains through systematic processes of assessment, planning, implementation, and outcome monitoring, while establishing a positive relationship between the music therapist and the client.



Comparison Table (Summary)



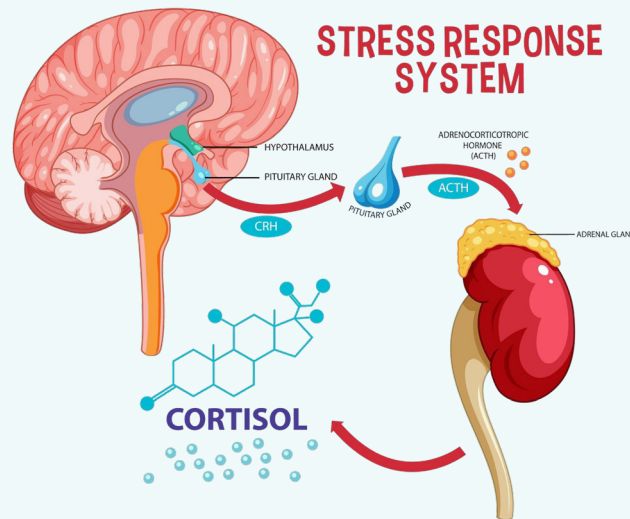
Topic	Music Therapy	Casual Music Listening (Music listening / Music medicine)
Practitioner	Trained/certified music therapist	General public or general health-care personnel
Process	Includes assessment, goals, plans, and outcome documentation	Primarily listening for atmosphere/relaxation
Individualization	High, tailored to individual and context	Depends on listener's choice
Interaction	Interactive between therapist, client, and music	Often one-way reception (passive)

**Important points: Participants “do not need to be able to play music” and “music genres are unlimited.”**

Suitable music is music that aligns with goals and meaning to the listener.

## 2. Understanding Stress and the Role of Music in Mental Care

When the brain perceives stress, the body may secrete the hormone cortisol, which affects various systems such as respiratory rate, heart rate, and blood pressure. In the short term, it may resemble excitement, but if stress persists, it may have opposite effects such as easy fatigue, easy stress, muscle tension, headaches, easy startle, shortness of breath, decreased concentration, and changes in sleep patterns.



<b>short term</b>		<b>long term</b>		
respiratory rate, heart rate excitement		easy fatigue decreased concentration	muscle tension	changes in sleep patterns

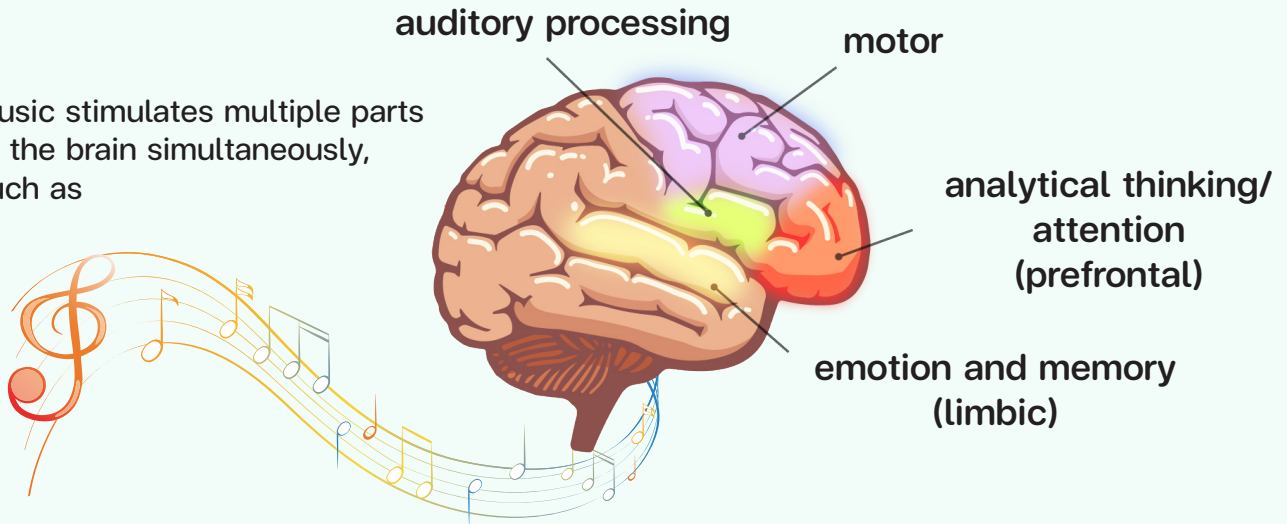
### Simple Self-Monitoring Guidelines

● —————>	<b>1 week</b>	● —————>	<b>2 weeks</b>
Spend 1-2 minutes daily sitting and asking yourself how tense, anxious, or sad you feel today	review/adjust your environment and triggers as much as possible	severe/affecting daily life, consider consulting a specialist (e.g., physician/psychiatrist)	

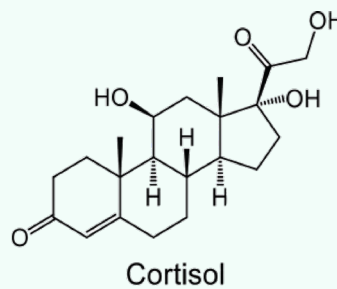
Music is an accessible and flexible mental care tool, but it should be chosen appropriately for your goals and condition (e.g., not too loud, and avoid music that triggers painful memories when you are not ready).

# 3. How Music Affects the Brain and Body (Overview)

Music stimulates multiple parts of the brain simultaneously, such as



Music is associated with neurotransmitters/hormones such as dopamine (motivation/happiness) and cortisol (stress), causing emotional and physiological changes



**Entrainment concept:**  
The body tends to adjust internal rhythms (e.g., breathing/heartbeat/walking pace) to match consistent external rhythms, so it can be applied to walking training or breathing regulation

# 4. Musical Elements That Affect Us and Song Selection Concepts

A single song has multiple elements that affect the body and emotions differently. Understanding these elements helps choose music appropriately for goals.

## 4 Main Elements



### Melody

Familiar melodies often lead to memories and emotions from the past



### Rhythm/Tempo

Fast music creates alertness and desire to move, while slow music helps slow breathing and calm down



### Harmony

The tone of chords/sound colors provides different feelings (e.g., bright and fresh or dark and sad)



### Lyrics

Content may help reflect and accept emotions, but should not be listened to the point of being immersed in negative emotions

## Checklist Selecting Music for Self-Care (Basic)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Do I need to "relax" or "stimulate to get up and do things" right now?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does this music slow my breathing/reduce tension, or make me more alert?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does it have content/memories that are triggers?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the volume appropriate (not too loud to disturb/risk hearing)?

## 5. Benefits of Music Therapy (Categorized into 4 Dimensions)

### Dimension 1: Physical

- Supports cardiovascular system relaxation in some contexts, especially when selecting appropriate music/structure
- Helps manage pain and fatigue, such as in cancer patients or post-surgery (often used with breathing/relaxation techniques)
- In children with asthma, reports indicate that participating in music therapy may help with lung function and reduce emergency service use in some studies



### Dimension 2: Emotional/ Mental

- Helps reduce stress, anxiety, and supports emotional regulation
- Provides channels for communication and emotional expression, both verbal and non-verbal



### Dimension 3: Social and Relationships

- Joint music activities (e.g., singing/clapping/dancing to the same rhythm) help create a sense of belonging
- Music connects people of different ages through shared stories and memories



### Dimension 4: Cognitive and Intellectual

- Attentive listening, singing, and playing music involve attention, memory, planning, and eye-hand-ear-body coordination



## 6. Examples of Applications in Health-care and Rehabilitation



**Stroke rehabilitation:** Using musical instruments to train fingers and hands, and Melodic Intonation Therapy (MIT) technique to help communication in people with aphasia



**Dementia/Alzheimer's:** Familiar music may help stimulate memory, reduce confusion, and improve quality of life



**Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI):** Using music with memory exercises helps stabilize physical indicators (e.g., pulse/blood pressure) in some contexts



**Mental health and trauma survivor groups:** Group activities such as drumming or composing music together may help reduce depression/anxiety symptoms and enhance psychological resilience



**Infants in NICU:** Live music adjusted to the infant's breathing rhythm may help stabilize vital signs and promote parent-infant bonding

**Note:** Outcomes depend on context and individuals. These examples are an overview from academic work/clinical experience, not a guarantee of individual results.



## 7. Brief Activity: Slow Breathing + Humming for Relaxation (5-7 minutes)

1



**Sit comfortably,**  
place feet on the floor,  
relax shoulders

2



**Close eyes or look down,**  
listen to surrounding  
sounds for 10-15 seconds

3



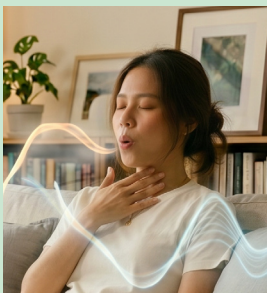
**Breathe in and out  
slowly 3-5 times**

4



**Exhale with a long “hum” sound**  
(doesn’t need to be beautiful, doesn’t  
need to be right on key, do it freely)

5



**Try placing your hand on  
your neck or chest**  
to feel the vibration from the  
humming sound

6



**After finishing,**  
**observe yourself: Is  
your breathing lighter?**  
**Is tension reduced?**

**Recommendation:** Can be done with light background music or favorite music, and can be stopped immediately if feeling uncomfortable.

# 8. Safety, Scope, Ethics, and References

## Safety (Trauma-informed)



Music may trigger painful memories. If you feel uncomfortable, stop/change music immediately



Avoid playing music too loud to prevent hearing damage



If negative emotions persist for ~2 weeks or affect daily life, consult a specialist

## Ethics in Brief

Music therapy is a professional process with systematic assessment, planning, and outcome monitoring, working with health teams as appropriate, which differs from using music for entertainment or approaches not based on science



## References (Additional Resources)

- Harvard Health Publishing. Music as medicine. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/music-as-medicine>
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- InCadence. 10 brilliant discoveries making waves in music therapy research. <https://www.incadence.org/post/10-brilliant-discoveries-making-waves-in-music-therapy-research>