

## The Power of Music to Reduce Stress

The soothing power of music is well-established. It has a unique link to our emotions, so it makes sense that it can be an extremely effective stress management tool.

Listening to music can have a tremendously relaxing effect on our minds and bodies, especially slow, quiet classical music. This type of music can have a beneficial effect on our physiological functions, slowing the pulse and heart rate, lowering blood pressure, and decreasing the levels of stress hormones. Music, in short, can act as a powerful stress management tool in our lives.

Musical preference varies widely between individuals, so only you can decide what you like and what is suitable for each mood. But even if you don't usually listen to classical music it may be worth giving it a try when selecting the most calming music.

When people are really stressed, there is a tendency to avoid actively listening to music. Perhaps it feels like a waste of time, not helping to achieve anything. But as we know, productivity increases when stress is reduced, so this is another area where you can gain vast rewards. It just takes a small effort to begin with. To incorporate music into a busy life, try playing CDs, download Pandora, or put the radio on when in the bedroom, bath or shower. Take portable music with you when going for a walk or walking the dog, or put music on instead of the TV.

Singing (or shouting) along can also be a great release of tension, and karaoke is very enjoyable for some extroverts! Calming music before bedtime promotes peace and relaxation and helps to induce sleep.

Certain music is appropriate for meditation as it can help the mind slow down and initiate the relaxation response. However, not all peaceful or "New Age" music works for everyone. Music with no structure can be irritating or even unsettling. Gentle music with a familiar melody is often more comforting. **I suggest you search to find what music produces a sense of calm, familiarity, and centeredness for you as an individual.**

The sounds of nature are often incorporated into phone apps that are made specifically for relaxation. For example, the sound of water can be soothing for some people. It can help conjure up calming images such as lying beside a mountain stream on a warm spring day. Birdsong may also be of use as an aid to help your mind slow down and release stressful thoughts.

**Music has been used for hundreds of years to treat illnesses and restore harmony between mind and body. So the next time you are feeling stressed, why not listen to some music?**

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