

History of Islam

An encyclopedia of Islamic history

Music Therapy

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In 1944 Edgar Cayce, who healed thousands of people while in a trance state, said “Music is the medicine of the future.”(1) Currently, some religious scholars in the Islamic world denounce music. This paper analyzes the Islamic perspective on music and singing, and concludes that using music as a therapeutic agent in medicine is not forbidden.

Documented evidence shows the power of music can be tapped to heal the body, strengthen the mind, and unlock the creative spirit. Published papers and journal articles offer dramatic accounts of how doctors, musicians, and healthcare professionals use music to deal with everything from anxiety to cancer, high blood pressure, chronic pain, dyslexia, and even mental illness. During childbirth, music can relieve expectant mothers’ anxiety and help release endorphins, the body’s natural painkillers, and thereby dramatically decrease the need for anesthesia.

Exposure to sound, music, and other acoustical vibrations can have a lifelong effect on health, learning, and behavior, for such exposure stimulates learning and memory and strengthens one’s listening abilities. Music has been used as a treatment or cure from migraines to substance abuse.

One thousand years ago, Muslim physicians were in the forefront of medicine and used innovations and therapeutic techniques that are now considered modern. They treated mental illnesses by confining patients in asylums with twenty-first-century techniques of music therapy. In Fez, Morocco, an asylum for the mentally ill was built early in the eighth century, and asylums for the insane were built in Baghdad (705), Cairo (800), and Damascus and Aleppo (1270). In addition to baths and drugs, the mentally ill received kind and benevolent treatment, and were exposed to highly developed music-based therapy and occupational therapy. Special choirs and live bands were brought daily to present singing, musical, and comical performances to patients.

Malik al-Mansur Sayf al-Din Qalawun built the al-Mansuri hospital in Cairo (1284). Its most outstanding characteristic was that, just like today’s advanced hospitals, provisions were made to entertain patients with light music. Professional storytellers were appointed to narrate stories and jokes (radio, TV, and computers perform these functions today). People who called the faithful to prayer would sing religious songs in their melodious voices before the morning call to prayer; so that afflicted patients might forget their suffering. This hospital still renders such services today.

Medical benefits

Music therapy has been lost for more than 1,000 years in the Muslim world and in the West. In the last three decades or so, the West has shown tremendous interest in using music therapy to treat several diseases and ailments. No one knows exactly how music heals, but it looks like our brains are wired to respond to it.

Dr. Clive Robbins, a co-founder of the Nordoff-Robbins Center for Music Therapy at New York University in New York City, says: "There is something intrinsically musical about the brain's neurological structure and the muscular function of the human organism. At a nonverbal level, music activates our minds, integrates our attention, and seems to help regulate some body functions."(2) He has treated a child afflicted with cerebral palsy with music therapy in order to teach the child how to balance his body, coordinate his limbs' movement, and communicate. It has made him motivated and intent.

The right song seems to work in more than one way—distracting us from pain, boosting one's mood, reviving old memories, and even prompting the body to match its rhythms. Music has long been appreciated for its calming effects, but new research shows it also may have the power to restore and keep us healthy. Soothing sounds, from Tibetan chants to Beethoven symphonies, are being given scientific credit for preventing colds, easing labor pains, and even boosting anti-aging hormones. One study found that surgery patients who listened to comforting music recovered more quickly and felt less pain than those who did not. The International Journal of Arts Medicine reports that infants in intensive care units go home three days earlier, eat better, and gain more weight if the staff talks and sings to them.

Clinical studies and anecdotal evidence from music therapists suggest that the sound of music is soothing and comfortable. For example, music is credited with lowering cortisol, a stress hormone, as much as 25 percent; boosting endorphins, the body's natural opiates or feel-good drugs; reducing pain after surgery and reducing the need for sedatives and pain relievers; making patients recover from surgery faster and with less pain; possibly preventing colds; raising blood levels of Immunoglobulin A (immune system fighter) to a whopping 14.1 percent; and easing labor without drugs. It also seems to help premature infants in intensive care; stimulate the brain's neural connections and promote children's spatial ability and memory; lower blood pressure as much as 5 points, reduce heart rate, improve cardiac output, and relax muscle tension; and manage non-pharmacological pain and discomfort.

But these are not all of its benefits, for research shows that music also improves the mood and mobility of people with Parkinson's, decreases nausea during chemotherapy, helps patients participate in medical treatment, decreases length of hospital stay, relieves anxiety and reduces stress, eases depression, enhances concentration and creativity, brings positive changes in mood and emotional states, increases awareness of self and environment, gives a sense of control over life through successful experiences, provides an outlet for expressing feelings, improves memory recall and thereby contributes to reminiscence and satisfaction with life. In addition, music therapy may allow for emotional intimacy with families and caregivers, relaxation for the entire family, and meaningful time spent together in a positive, creative way.

Exciting new research suggests that our brains respond to music almost as if it were medicine. Music may regulate some body functions, synchronize motor skills, stimulate mind and even make us smarter. According to Suzanne Hanser, D. Ed., a lecturer at Harvard Medical School's Department of Social Medicine: "There is no set prescription or a particular piece of music that will make everyone feel better or more relax. What counts is musical taste, kinds of memories, feelings and associations a piece of music brings to mind. Some people relax to classical music, others like the Moody Blues. The key is to individualize your musical selections."(3)

Depression

Research conducted at the Stanford University School of Medicine provides some interesting results. For one group of 20 people aged between 61 and 86, moods rose and depression fell when they listened to familiar music they selected, on their own or with the help of a music therapist, while practicing various stress-reduction techniques. A control group who missed out on the music and the exercises saw no improvement during the 8-week study period. It helps to perform gentle exercises, depending on one's fitness level, while the music plays. Movements should be light and flowing. Breathe to the music, and gently come to rest when the music ends.

Insomnia

A study from the University of Louisville School of Nursing Research indicates that 24 out of 25 people with sleeping problems nod off more quickly, sleep longer, or get back to sleep more easily after listening to classical music. The music must be quiet and melodic, have a slow beat and few, if any, rhythmic accents. To be effective, one should skip the after-dinner coffee or tea and avoid telephone calls and TV after 9 p.m. Softer and quieter music should be played as bedtime approaches. Listen to the music in bed with a tape recorder or a CD player equipped with a silent on/off switch. One should lie quietly and take even, deep breaths.

Stress

Many studies have found that soothing melodies can ease anxiety and quiet both blood pressure and heart rate even under very stressful conditions. Everyday stress also responds to music. Select music that grabs your attention and, at the same time, relax your body so that all of your worries slip away. Slow music, like a love song sung by an accomplished singer or a calm instrumental piece may be perfect. If a slow tune gives your mind time to fret or obsess, switch to something livelier. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position and where you will not be disturbed. After a few minutes, perform a relaxation exercise.

One Response to *Music Therapy*

says: ساسة بوست : الألحان قد تكون أفضل من الأدوية.. هذه قصة العلاج بالموسيقى – أخباري الآن

June 15, 2017 at 8:19 am

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