

# MUSIC MATTERS

*BY DR. PHIL MAFFETONE*

Do you want to know a secret? Like diet, nutrition and other lifestyle factors, music can play an eloquent role in improving your quality of life. There's nothing like listening to Mozart, the Beatles or Cat Stevens to reduce stress or meditatively ponder life. There's a place for Chopin, Dylan or Joplin. Match the music with your mood, and you're on your way.

Music may not always be a magical mystery tour, but it sure can do something unique. Scientists have shown beneficial effects of music on controlling stress, reducing pain, and improving immune and brain function. Music around mealtime can help digestion, too. After a hard day's night, or if you're been working eight days a week, relaxing and listening to some good music can help. Everything seems to come together, emotionally, in a healthy, therapeutic way.

Music as therapy is thousands of years old. Perhaps the first recorded therapeutic use came from Chinese medicine about 5,000 years ago. About 2500 B.C., followers of Pythagoras developed a science of musical psychotherapy. Today, the long and winding road of music includes treatment for many types of patients, including those with depression, autism, learning disabilities, Alzheimer's and others. But almost anyone can enjoy the music as well as its health benefits.

It's not necessary to know the musical key associated with particular areas of the body, as taught in Chinese medicine, because the particular music that is most therapeutic is the music you like. Most likely, the music you find most comforting includes tunes from yesterday — those associated with good memories, typically from when you were younger.

This is the basis for using music in the treatment of brain disorders, from simple memory problems to more serious diseases. Stimulating auditory sense is just one way to trigger emotions with potentially therapeutic outcomes. Another way is visual — so watching a music video, or being at a concert may even be more powerful. Applying the kinesthetic sense — in this case the act of playing music — can even be more potent. Add some dancing (you can even twist and shout) and now you've brought in an aerobic component.

Directed at consumers, music equals money: studies show that background music can bring increased sales. This subliminal use of music has been used for centuries. And many of the successful radio and TV commercials use well-known music to sell products.

Just as we can use a healthy snack in place of junk food, so too can music rescue us from things like television, unpleasant get-togethers and other unhealthy activities. So pull those old records out of the attic. Better yet, since you probably don't have your old turntable, buy some new CDs — think of it like you're buying organic lettuce or hormone-free beef. Dig it. The End.