

The link between music and better studying performance



Music is an age-old method of passing on melodies and memories. It is greatly appreciated by all religions, cultures and ages. Now students are turning to music while they study and do their homework; earphones are making a regular appearance at libraries and study venues. The sheer number of people who do this indicates that there must be some relevance in their argument of music being beneficial to their studies.

According to Dr Masha Godkin, “ Music activates both the left and right brain at the same time, and the activation of both hemispheres can maximize learning and improve memory,” (Northcentral University, 2017). Studies have repeatedly proven that our emotions are directly linked to the music we listen to, thus by listening to music that we enjoy we are decreasing levels of anxiety and depression (Goodwin, 2015) while simultaneously creating a positive mood as it causes the release of dopamine (Baker, 2016). It has also been proven that personality plays a large role in the affects a certain type of music has on a person. It is therefore impossible to generalise a statement in saying that there is “ no way” anyone could be academically enhanced by a type of music.

By adding music to our study periods we are able to concentrate on a specific task for longer periods of time (Study. com, Unknown). This feeds into the theory that humans have two attention systems – a conscious and an unconscious one. The conscious one is used when we want to focus on a task at hand, while our unconscious one is busy roaming the periphery of our senses and trying to pick up on anything significant. The activity of this unconscious attention system is seemingly exacerbated when we are trying to complete tasks that do not interest us as we are already trying hard to

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concentrate. Music essentially serves to pacify this attention system by giving it something simple to focus on and allowing the conscious attention system to focus on what we want it to. It is in this way that music can enable people to work more efficiently and with more focus (Burnett, 2016).

However, there is a very different side of the spectrum when it comes to the yay or nay of using music while learning. Several other studies have shown that music can hamper your serial-recall ability (Goodwin, 2015).

Remembering a list of things in a specific order is made far more difficult with music as you are thrown off by the words and tune playing in the background (Doraiswamy, 2012).

People are inherently prone to respond to rhythms with movement (Daniel, Unknown). This behaviour is perfectly acceptable where dance is expected or allowed, but in an educational environment students are obliged to devote all their attention and energy to their learning and the improvement of their knowledge. This is something music prevents as learners are distracted by their desire to dance along to the beat.

Offensive material is so often used in songs nowadays (Daniel, Unknown) that those who regularly listen to such songs have become numb to it. This, although an issue, is not the main one because while it is on some levels admissible to expose oneself to such content, it is not at all appropriate to do so to others. Students do not arrive at school to hear the inappropriate content of their peers' music, or learn of things they'd really rather not have known. Unfortunately this can be the exact sort of situation that occurs when music is listened to in schools.

However, the increase in music throughout the world has displayed the importance of it in all of our lives. In the past music was itself something people often studied very seriously, so using it in the pursuit of our own studies is simply logical. Its very presence is a force to be reckoned with and to deny students access to this is like telling them they cannot be part of the human race. Music forms a vital and necessary aspect of the human condition. There has also not been enough research on how music affects each individual, and it has been reiterated that, in the end, it's up to personal choice. This, to me, implies that if music is working for us (which it seems to be) we should keep doing what we're doing - using it.