


MUSIC AS THERAPY

Music energises both the body and the mind, and can be used therapeutically to help people improve their health and emotional state. It has become a passion in Frances le Roux's life, and she shares personal and professional experiences that continue to motivate her.



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 The focus of this article is on classical music, because of its therapeutic value. Its rhythmical inconsistency has been found to encourage a more intense expression of emotions than a regular beat does, the latter serving more to vent or purge the feeling before it is completely censored.¹ Music interventions in the health setting should always have a function: reducing anxiety or stress, decreasing pain, inducing sleep or supporting the immune system. It is important to have some knowledge of music's structural value and the choices available to achieve the therapeutic goal.

CAUTION WITH MUSIC AS THERAPY

Therapeutic music is usually free of side-effects, but it will affect each person differently. Music is able to make individuals happy or sad; it can stimulate or be soothing and relaxing. Musical intervention should therefore always be used with care. When music becomes extremely regular, our brains reject it. A good example is com-

puter-generated music, in which tempo and loudness are perfectly constant. Such music often provokes anxiety in the musically sensitive person.

Music volume should never be too high, and it should be played intermittently, as continuous exposure may become monotonous for the patient and lead to irritation rather than a state of well-being. In a professional environment it should have a function, and offensive lyrics or melancholic messages in songs should be avoided. Research indicates that 25 - 90 minutes of music therapy is optimal.

CHOOSING MUSIC

If desired, the patient's own choice can be taken into consideration. It's advisable to put forward a music category for the patient to choose from.

Music that matches the individual's mood is generally therapeutically beneficial, and for