



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Processing or Playing Music is an Ultimate Brain Performance Workout

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **Listening to music is more than simply a pleasant way to unwind. Today, we look at the way music can help keep your brain young and optimally performing, no matter your chronological age.***

Imagine a workout that challenges every muscle in your body but leaves you feeling like you just had a relaxing massage. That’s what music can do for your brain, and it’s why the act of listening or playing music can protect and enhance brain health, optimize performance, and decrease risk of brain illness across all ages.

[According to a Harvard Health report](#), music activates “the broadest and most diverse networks of the brain.” These brain networks and pathways are involved in well-being, learning, cognitive function, quality of life, and happiness. Harvard Medical School neurologist and psychiatrist David Silversweig, MD, described the areas of the brain involved in processing music:

- The temporal lobe processes tone and pitch.
- The cerebellum processes and regulates rhythm and movement.
- The amygdala and hippocampus are involved with emotion and memory.
- Various areas of the brain’s reward system are activated.

“All of these areas,” Silbersweig said, “must work in concert to integrate the various layers of sound across space and time for us to perceive a series of sounds as a musical composition.”

Music has long been used with people who suffer from brain injury, Alzheimer’s and dementia, depression or other neurological conditions. For instance, patients with short-term memory loss from brain injury or dementia can recognize a song from their past and recall pleasant memories.

The brains of Parkinson's disease patients are stimulated by marches or other rhythmic music, resulting in body movement.

Playing music or learning a new instrument can offer additional benefits because it incorporates motor skills and concentration. Cognitive skills such as hearing and working memory typically decline with age. But studies have shown people who participate in music practice maintain, or even experience gains, in those skills.

In [one study](#), researchers used MRI scans to view that musicians, both professional and amateur, have younger-looking brains than non-musicians. In the study, a low BrainAGE score meant the brain was aging slowly. Musicians had lower scores and fewer signs of brain aging than non-musicians. Surprisingly, amateur musicians had even lower scores than professional musicians, possibly because they don't face the stressors that come along with playing in front of a demanding audience.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

You have heard the phrase "whistle while you work." Well, research has shown that playing certain types of music can have a positive effect on your productivity, either by enhancing your ability to process information, effectively blocking out background noise or syncing up with your brain waves. Here are six music styles that just may help get your brain humming.

- **CLASSICAL.** This type of music is usually calming and lacks words that could distract you.
- **NATURE SOUNDS.** The music of the great outdoors, like a babbling brook or soft rain falling, has been shown to boost mood and focus. Try to avoid the more disconcerting sounds, though, like a donkey braying or a rooster crowing.
- **CINEMATIC MUSIC.** Do you want to feel as if whatever you're doing could change the world? Put on a grandiose score or movie soundtrack. It can optimize your brain health by increasing your spirits and brightening your mood.
- **VIDEO GAME MUSIC.** The sounds of video games are strategically designed to keep your brain engaged and focused. Like classical music, it lacks lyrics. But unlike classical, it's almost always fast-paced and keeps your brain on track.
- **MUSIC BETWEEN 50 and 80 BEATS PER MINUTE.** Cognitive behavioral therapist Dr. Emma Gray reported that listening to music with this tempo puts the brain into an alpha state, a relaxed frame of mind that makes us more receptive and open.
- **YOUR FAVORITE MUSIC.** Studies have shown that hearing your favorite type of music improves your brain performance, including mood and productivity.

BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:

- Stress resilience
- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Sleep

- Social connection
- Emotional wellbeing
- Meaning and Purpose
- Cognitive stimulation and creativity
- Engaging with nature
- General health
- Positive impacts

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, uses a cutting-edge approach to protecting brain health, promoting brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is building brain healthy communities, cultures that foster brain health protective factors and address risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the ***Be Brain Healthy*** movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference.*** To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).