

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Music Makes a Difference and Brain Health Matters

*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 fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **March 1 is International Music Therapy Day, and we are taking a look at how music makes a difference when it comes to our brain health.***

Music is a powerful brain health protective factor. You may have found yourself driving down the road, thinking about your long list of to-dos when a song that was popular when you were in high school comes on the radio. Immediately, you are back at a high school dance or with your childhood friends, wherever you were the first time you heard that song. Those notes trigger an emotional and physical response that is undeniable.

Music's influences on our brain health and performance range from memory and mood to cardiovascular function and athletic performance. According to neurologist and Harvard professor of psychiatrist, David Silbersweig, MD, music activates many different parts of the brain. In an article from [Harvard Medical School](#), Dr. Silbersweig points out the areas of the brain that allow us to hear music.

- The temporal lobe helps process tone and pitch.
- The cerebellum processes and regulates rhythm, timing, and physical movement.
- The amygdala and hippocampus play a role in our emotions and memories.
- The brain's reward system triggers feelings of happiness and pleasure.

All of these areas must work together in order for us to process the notes being played as more than just noise, but a musical composition.

Studies show that music has far-reaching healing capabilities and promotes brain health protective factors while reducing risk factors of brain illness. In addition to helping us express our feeling and communicate with others, it also:

- Reduces stress
- Improves mood
- Improves sleep
- Reduces depression

- Lowers anxiety
- Improves cognitive function
- Reduces fatigue
- Boosts exercise performance
- Improves balance
- Improves cardiovascular function

The healing ability of music is universal: across all cultures and for all ages. Studies have found that adding music to the sounds in a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) helped soothe the babies, while improving their sleeping and eating patterns. It also helped decrease the parents' stress.

Kids benefit from learning about music. Research shows that learning music improves neural activity in the brain. Students who participate in music education often see improvement in other learning skills, such as language development, spatial intelligence and improved test scores.

As we age, music continues to play an important role in our brain health. A recent [survey by AARP](#) suggests music is good for our brain, heart, and soul. The survey of more than 3,000 adults over the age of 18 found that people who actively listen to music had higher than average scores for mental well-being, and slightly reduced levels of anxiety and depression compared to people overall.

So, turn up the volume. Get your brain and body moving, and enjoy all the brain health benefits of listening to your favorite songs.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Appreciating music is easy — it is all around us.

- Create playlists that comfort, inspire, and get you moving.
- Listen to music that matches — or improves — your mood.
- Learn an instrument. You are never too old, or too young, to learn something new.
- Make music and move to regain a sense of control and well-being.
- Sing, pound, beat, clap, stomp, rock and roll: make your music move.
- Go to a concert. It may be hard to get the full concert experience while social distancing, but there are films and virtual events that bring the excitement of a live concert into your home.
- Create a virtual dance party. Even while social distancing you can still enjoy music with your friends.
- Listen with your kids. Learn more about the music that they are listening to and share the songs that are part of your life.
- **BE BRAIN HEALTHY** and adopt a lifestyle that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses and language that promote:
 - 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) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is a collaborative effort with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, to build brain healthy communities through education, collaboration, research, innovation, and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention and optimization of performance*. The BHI is creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases 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](#).