

MINDRAMP CONSULTING

“My BRAIN is alive . . . with the Sound of Music.”

Apologies to Rodgers & Hammerstein and Julie Andrews . . . but it's TRUE!



Prepare your brain for a bountiful body of new research on how Music can “Change the Brain.” For years, music therapy experts, caregiving professionals and family members have known, through experience, that music does - something or a combination of somethings - to improve our health and elevate mood. But, what is that something?

What plausible mechanisms might explain the benefits of music? How can art – either creating it or appreciating it - actually change biological functions? Music is a form of art that seems too ethereal and insubstantial to be equated with medicine. Art isn't scientific enough to be taken seriously as a medical intervention.

To answer these objections, the “something” in music that contributes to health and wellness is being identified, measure and tested. We encourage these researchers to proceed with sufficient rigor to convince the scientific community and the health care industry that music is a viable and cost-effective medical intervention. Without the solid foundation of evidence, it is unlikely that the strategic delivery of music will become a serious component of every elder living or care organization's wellness department.

Nevertheless, the anecdotal evidence of music's power to heal has compelled some, including MINDRAMP, to explore the healing potential of music in advance of the traditional scientific community, trusting that the harder evidence will flow from the research pipeline to confirm our hopes.

In 2012, MINDRAMP embraced the potential recognized by Oliver Sacks and Dr. Bill Thomas when they put their considerable shoulders behind the documentary film, “Alive Inside” directed by Michael Rosario-Bennett. The film tells the story of Alzheimer's patients, like Henry, who are brought back

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to life through music. We, like everyone else who sees this award-winning documentary film, were inspired and moved. We updated our MINDRAMP projects, including “The Aging Mind” gerontology course and helped produce our “The Neurochemistry of Music” / “The Power of Music” teaching videos.

Breakthrough books such as “Your Brain on Music” by Daniel Levitin and “Musicophilia” by Oliver Sacks have provided popular overviews of the power of music and persuasive scientific evidence continues to accumulate. As this surge of research findings are assembled, it reveals a growing range of biological functions that are profoundly influenced by music.



It is clear that we have reached an irreversible tipping point in the evolution of music research. This change is reflected in the headlines that can now accompany scientific articles on music. Until recently, an article in the superb Scientific American Mind magazine, for example, might have tentatively asked, “*Can Music Really Heal the Brain?*” The article might then answer with a resounding “Maybe.” MIND’s March - April 2015 cover article speaks volumes: “*How Music Heals the Brain.*” The discussion just shifted from wondering if to explaining how.

Individual strands of evidence still need to be wound together into solid cords of understanding. These cords need to be woven together to create the sturdy fabric of a compelling, evidence-based narrative that can be understood by scientists, health care providers and the general public alike.

So, what’s over the horizon? We fully believe that the construction of a music intervention research pathway is well underway. We also believe that music research will provide a blueprint for other non-pharmaceutical, sensory-based cognitive interventions. Spring term, we will be exploring the health benefits of music and other sensory interventions with the launch of a pair of new gerontology courses, “Cognitive Activity Design” and “Arts & Cognitive Activity Design.” In the later, we will be investigating the unique benefits of the full range of art domains.

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