

Boquete Health & Hospice



Music Plus Meditation - Complimentary Wellness Practices

By Art Blevins

Mindfulness meditation is a popular stress management strategy which promotes a calm mind and tranquil body. With regular practice, meditation can help one to build a higher resilience to stress [6]. Included in the Harvard report “Six Relaxation Techniques to Reduce Stress,” the practice of mindfulness meditation involves sitting comfortably, focusing on one’s breathing, and bringing the mind’s attention to the present moment without drifting into concerns about the past or the future. This form of meditation has enjoyed increasing popularity in recent years, scientifically proven to reduce anxiety, depression, and pain. [1]

As with meditation, scientific research has also verified that music has many wonderful benefits for relaxation, stress management and overall health and well-being. What happens when two popular stress-reduction, relaxation and wellness techniques are combined? Research indicates a synergistic effect. A report in the *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health* found the combination of mindfulness and music listening is effective for treating one of the most common mental health issues: depression. [4] Another research study [5] indicates that combining both music listening and mindfulness can have positive effects on mood, concentration, cognition, and attentional control, as well as better emotion regulation, and of course enhanced enjoyment and relaxation. Multiple research studies show that combining music with meditation can deepen the positive effects of both, bringing a deeper sense of relaxation and stress relief. [1,4,5,6]

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Music Facilitates Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation can be practiced anytime and anywhere. However, if one finds mindfulness meditation challenging, listening to music can be a powerful way to stay focused in the present moment, while simultaneously helping to connect with music as a source of strength and creative energy. [2] For those who are new to meditation (or those who are perfectionists), music meditation can feel simpler and more instantly relaxing than other forms of meditation practice.

Mindfulness Meditation Enhances the Experience of Listening to Music

Research has also shown that mindfulness meditation can increase one's music listening sensitivity and also listening enjoyment, providing additional potency for relaxation and reduction of stress and anxiety. [3] It is simple to reap the additional wellness benefits. All one needs to do is surrender deeply to an experience many of us routinely indulge ourselves in anyway: listening to music. We simply set aside time to listen for a few minutes in a fully focused manner.

A SIMPLE MUSIC AND MEDITATION TECHNIQUE

The following steps will guide you through the experience of combining music listening and mindfulness meditation. It is important to approach music meditation with an attitude of slowing down and focusing on the present moment. Try to set aside at least twenty minutes. [6]

1. PREPARATION

Carefully choose a piece of music. Look for pieces that have a slower tempo. Instrumental pieces are recommended, as lyrics can more easily lead to distraction and engages your conscious mind—the part of your mind that we hope to slow down. The music can either be familiar or unfamiliar. Use headphones or earbuds if that helps you focus or shut out external noise.

2. BEGINNING

Relax and Focus on Your Breath—Get into a comfortable position and relax – although it doesn't matter what's going on around you or where you are - whether you're standing, sitting, walking, or laying down (though some avoid laying down so they don't fall asleep). Focus on your breath - inhale gently through your nose and exhale deeply through your mouth. Notice your body, and tune into how it feels. Notice any physical structures your body is touching - the floor, the chair, or your shoes - as well as any physical sensations (tightness, tension) in your body. Try to release any tension you detect in your body.

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3. LISTENING

Just listen. Give yourself permission to only listen to the music, without simultaneously checking your email or refreshing your social media feed. Close your eyes. And stay focused on the music. If you find yourself thinking about other things (or even thinking thoughts about the music), gently redirect your attention to the present moment and the sound of the music. The goal of this practice is to quiet the chattering mind and just 'be'. So just 'be' with the music, and fully immerse yourself, and you'll feel more relaxed fairly quickly. [6]

4. CLOSING

Continue an attitude of listening. To finish up the music meditation session, continue to sit in silence for a few minutes. Focus on your breath again and check in with your body, how you are feeling. Listen to your body. Even though the music has stopped, continue to listen to the sounds around you, no matter how subtle.

REFLECTION

After your music meditation, take time to reflect. Does anything feel different? Do you notice any shifts after listening to the piece of music? Do you feel calmer? If the piece you chose didn't feel like a good fit, what might you look for in another piece (i.e., slower, fewer instruments, louder)?

This music and mindfulness experience can be useful to practice daily. You might experiment with different types of music as a way to notice different responses. You may also find that repeating the same piece of music is a sort of touchstone, a way to continually reconnect to that place inside where gentle pausing and noticing can happen with ease. [2]

TIPS

If you find the music brings lots of thoughts, memories, and internal dialogue, switch to a different type of music. Instrumental music can come in many forms, including classical, jazz, new age, and more, and it can be less distracting than other types of music. [6]

If you find yourself 'thinking too much', don't beat yourself up over it; this is natural for those beginning meditation practice. Instead, congratulate yourself on noticing the internal dialogue, and redirecting your attention to the present moment. [6]

RECOMMENDED MUSIC FOR MEDITATION [8]

- [Binaural Beats](#)
- [Monaural Beats](#)
- Solfeggio Frequencies:
 - [396 Hz Liberating Guilt and Fear](#)

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- [417 Hz Undoing Situations and Facilitating Change](#)
- [528 Hz Transformation and Miracles](#)
- [639 Hz Connecting/Relationships](#)
- [741 Hz Expression/Solutions](#)
- [852 Hz Returning to Spiritual Order](#)
- World Music
 - [Indian Classical Music](#) [9]
- Chant
 - [Gregorian Chants](#) [9]
- [Classical Music](#)
- [Ambient Music](#)
- [Isochronic Music](#)
- [Nature Field Recordings](#)
- [Instrumental Music](#) [9]
- [Nature](#)

YOUTUBE MUSIC & MEDIATION PLAYLISTS FROM THE MAGIC OF MUSIC TEAM

From the Magic of Music Team, below you will find links to music-based meditation playlists on YouTube, complete with meditation instructions to begin and end each music meditation experience. Each playlist below consists of three YouTube videos: a 3-minute introduction to ease you into a frame of mind for mindful listening, then approximately 10 minutes of instrumental music, followed by a short closing 3-minute guided meditation. [Choose any one of the playlists below to try it out for yourself!](#)

- [Kaivalya \(Flute\)](#)
- [Cello](#)
- [Hang Drum & Kalimba](#)
- [Handpan](#)
- [Ambient Music](#)

[We welcome your feedback!](#)

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The Magic of Music Team at Boquete Health & Hospice anticipates offering in-person Music and Meditation sessions, once pandemic avoidance measures allow us to safely gather. Let us know if you are interested in participating! Email us at Music@boquetehospice.org

REFERENCES

1. ["Six Relaxation Techniques to Reduce Stress"](#) – Harvard Medical School
2. ["Tuning In: Mindful Music Listening to Reduce Stress"](#) – Good Therapy
3. ["Mindful Music Listening Instruction Increases Listening Sensitivity and Enjoyment"](#) - Sage Journals
4. ["Mindful Music Listening as a Potential Treatment for Depression"](#) - Journal of Creativity in Mental Health
5. ["Participants' Experiences of Music, Mindful Music, and Audiobook Listening Interventions for People Recovering from Stroke"](#) - Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences - Special Issue: The Neurosciences and Music VI
6. ["How to Practice Music Meditation"](#) - Elizabeth Scott, MS
7. ["Neuroscience Shows Listening to Music has Kind of of the Same Effect as Meditation"](#) – Darin McFayden – Quartz
8. ["Types of Music for Meditation Enhancement and Stress Relief"](#) - Maniwala
9. ["10 Amazing Benefits of Listening to Music During Meditation"](#) – StyleCraze

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