

# **The Healing Power of Music**

By **Jay Uhler**

The topic for the August 15, 2008

Jordan Rich Show

The “Seminary Singers” musical director and internationally known baritone, who we affectionately called “Prof. Houghton,” used to tell us, “Music is the international language.”

Music consists of vibrations. Vibrations carry the emotions of the vocal or instrumental performers and elicit emotions in the listener. Music connects with people at the physical, spiritual and emotional levels, which is why it has such appeal.

Different types of music connect with people at various emotional levels. Big Band music brings about happy feelings for me. I had a friend who would purposely put on a particular vocalist so that she could cry. Music is used at sports events to stir up the crowd and motivate the players—or sometimes to distract them. Some music is used to relax—some to motivate. Some is used to express anger or rage.

Spiritual were used by the slaves to bring comfort, often with the promise of a better life. It’s hard to sit still when I hear, “When Those Saints Go Marchin’ In.” That’s a song to stand, sway and clap your hands.

One of the reason that the emotional response to music is healing is because illness is connected to blocked emotions. When emotions are managed in a healing way, health will follow. I have helped people to heal from physical illness by assisting them to release the emotions related to a previous trauma. This kind of “miracle occurs every day outside of the medical field—often with illnesses that medication only make worse, rather than better. Music can help the immune system, which helps medication to work better when it is being used. Some doctors claim that in certain instances, music therapy works better and is more cost effective than medication.

Researchers across the world have proven that Music Therapy alleviates body pain, depression, and Anxiety. Music even helps improve the nervous, immune and endocrine systems for overall well-being.

Music Therapy has been used in Turkey for about a thousand years. Using makams, Turkish tones, they send specific vibrations to certain organs and the emotions in the body to assist the organ to heal. It sounds to me as though the vibrations cause the emotions that are stored in the organs to be released.

The music therapy uses Turkish instruments like ney, ud, rebab and the soothing effects of water sounds. It is implemented in medical practices ranging from physical therapy to neurology and from cardiothoracic surgery to oncology. Many positive changes and improvements have also been recorded in psychological and physical illnesses ranging from autism and pediatrics to geriatrics. (To see more about Turkish music therapy, put “healing music in Turkey” in your search engine. You can also download free Turkish music and relaxation music and water sounds from some of the web sites listed.)

Music Therapy is used for surgical intervention and post-natal pain in prominent hospitals of Europe and America. Many use music as a way to ease patients' pain, lower blood pressure, reduce anxiety and depression and improve coping abilities to get patients well, faster.

**Dr. Diane Austin**, a professor at New York University, instructs in music therapy, supervises music therapists and provides music therapy for private clients. She is an amazing person. She is relaxing to be around and full of love. She has used music therapy in a variety of settings as you see below.

**Dr. Austin is a guest on the program tonight.** You can learn more about her and download articles from **her web site: [dianeAustin.com](http://dianeAustin.com)**. She has written at least twenty-four published articles and a book will be published soon.

She was the Co-Founder, Director and Music Therapist of the Turtle Bay Music School, Margules Music Therapy Program for Adolescents in Foster Care. Many of the youth were so withdrawn that they would barely speak. Others were hostile about the ways they had been treated in their life before they came to the school. Using music therapy and her marvelous therapeutic skills motivated by love, she assisted the youth to develop the best life possible within the context of the miserable life they were exposed to. Her school became a haven and a place for growth for these traumatized youth.

Dr. Austin has provided music therapy at the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra's pilot music therapy program, Maimonides Hospital; for the elderly alcoholic/psychiatric population at Roosevelt Hospital; at Bayview Correctional Facility in New York City; with battered women and children at Project Return in the Bronx; for women transitioning from prison to independent living at Greenhope Halfway House; for children with developmental disabilities at Willow Haven Day Care Center in Brooklyn, NY; and with the blind at Lighthouse for the Blind, New York, NY.

These are indications of her commitment to help people and also show the variety of individuals that can benefit from music therapy.

One more issue that I want to address related to music. That is **singing**.

Unfortunately, many people have been told when they were young that they can't sing. Sometimes they were embarrassed in school by insensitive or rude teachers. This is a tragedy.

Singing is one of the best things you can do for your health. It exercises a lot of muscles—and involves many emotions.

I have a bias. I believe that anyone who has a nice speaking voice can sing. I have had clients and friends have tested me on this theory. One friend was so convince as we spent a few minutes together at the piano that when he began to sing the notes on key, he said to me, "are you lying to me?" (He knows that I don't lie, but he couldn't believe that he could sing.) I responded, "Was I lying before when I told you that you were off key?"

We went to dinner after our music fest and when we went our separate ways, his head was still spinning with disbelief that he could actually sing a song.

I also believe that people who don't have a pleasing speaking voice can gain a pleasing a voice and they can sing. It will simply take longer for them. If they are willing to face the emotions that are stored in the muscles in their throat, their muscles can relax and they can sing. The throat is not involved in singing. It is the open passage that air

passes through. When it is constricted because the muscles are tense from storing blocked emotions, it does not let the air pass through unrestricted.

So if I am right, which I think I am, almost everyone can sing. That is great news! Your body and soul will love that you can sing and you will be healthier for it.

I wrote the lyrics to the following song. I don't plan to make a living as a song writer, yet there is a lot of information in the lyrics about singing and health. It has two endings, because I first wrote it as a Barbershop song.

### **Sing for the Health of It**

Music and friends go together  
Just like birds of a feather.  
Friends are good for your health,  
They add to your joy and wealth.

So breathe deeply and sing,  
Have yourself a fling.  
Drink lots of water too.  
It helps to lubricate you.

Sing the music with levity.  
That adds to your longevity.  
Even the tunes with tears  
Will add to your years.

Sing with gusto and a smile.  
That will add to your life a mile.  
And the audience you will entertain,  
As you sing each glorious refrain.

So let those Barbershop songs ring  
And just for the health of it  
—sing.

Or, the alternate ending is:

So let those refreshing tunes ring  
And just for the health of it  
— sing.

**So my suggestion to you is to listen to music and sing for the health of it!**

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**Jay Uhler** is a psychologist, an ordained minister, a professional speaker and a musical entertainer. He brings stories, humor and songs to lighten the lives and bring hope to those in his audience. He can be reached at 978-685-8550.