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Music Making Connections

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How Music Can Help Mental Health

By

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Keywords

Music, Mental Health, Concerts, Coronavirus, Virtual, Travel, Live, Singing, Dancing, Happiness, Friends, Family, Masks, Social Distancing

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has made mental health issues sky rocket. Many people are suffering from anxiety, depression, OCD and many other mental health problems now more than ever. Without the in-person interactions, many people are eager to be able to hug friends and family again. People are also eager to see their favorite music artist live in concert again. In this paper, we discuss how music can help your mental health, how to prevent contracting the coronavirus, and ways you can help speed up the process of getting life back to normal.

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Dr. Vogel

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Music Making Connections

Covid-19 is something we all have heard about and talked about just about every single day of these past 12 months. Covid has caused so many people to lose their loved ones, businesses, connections with families and friends, and overall, just not being able to do normal life activities. I never knew I could take that for granted. The year 2019 feels like a different lifetime ago. I was still in high school, I still attended events, and I had a job. One of the things that I and many other people have been struggling with during the pandemic is mental health. Missing daily activities and normal life has caused depression and anxiety to become much worse.

One of the activities I miss most is seeing live music. Although I can still listen to music in my room and in the car, there is no feeling like live music at an event. Picking out what you are going to wear, counting down the days till the show, the drive there, finding your seat, and the rush of adrenaline when the lights go down. It is a feeling like no other. Although wicked problems have many solutions, it is hard to think of the right solution to help all of the mental health issues in the world today, which is why I will be focusing on one of the things that helps my depression and anxiety the most, music. Bringing back live music will not be an easy overnight process, but it will happen someday in the near future.

Singing songs in a venue with thousands of other people is such a special moment. There is not one worry or care in the world. Everyone is just having the time of their life. I know some

people may not be big concert goers, but everyone has a favorite music genre. Whether it is pop, rock, country, or a mix of things, everyone has music that makes them happy. One of my sources uses history to prove its point, "*Vescelius, Eva Augusta. "Music and Health." The Musical Quarterly, vol. 4, no. 3, 1918*". It also discusses how music heals and helps recover. It discusses how in 100 B.C. music was used for vibrations in deafness. They argue, "Plato, Cicero, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Milton, and Rousseau have given ample testimony to the power of music to cure many kinds of diseases" (p. 376). This helps me understand that even long, long ago music has been used for health purposes. I had no idea that music was used historically for therapy reasons and hospice reasons, all the way back to 100 B.C. That is so crazy to me and such a cool thing to learn.

Another source discusses music therapy and how music has been used to help heal since World War II. It also discusses music helping people join together in communities and help survive. It discusses music in hospice care and helping people stay present, which I believe to be very important, "*Robertson-Gillam, Kirstin. "Community Music Therapy: From the Clinical to Community." Community Music in Oceania: Many Voices, One Horizon, edited by Brydie-Leigh Bartleet et al., University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 2018*".

Another source that discusses music and mental health includes this next one. One of the first lines from "*Wentz, Robert. "A Voice from Nevada: 'Music Is Basic.'" Music Educators Journal, vol. 72, no. 1, 1985*", "A world without music would be a sterile and impoverished place to live". It also discusses how music is the only universal language we have. "Music can aid in body coordination and be therapeutic for better health".

Some other sources I have can help music lovers as well as people looking for ways to improve their health. In this article, *Adler, Sarah Elizabeth. "Positive Effects of Music for Mental*

Health.” *AARP*, 30 June 2020, they want people to use their information for good to better themselves. This source uses facts and opinions to prove their point, "Especially now, in times when people are feeling sad, stressed and isolated because of the COVID-19 pandemic, people should definitely turn to music to better their mental well-being.” They also state, "While listening to music that you know and like tends to cause the strongest brain response and dopamine release, try listening to new music." Listening to new music can help your brain learn new sounds and ways to release dopamine and make people happy! This information helps me understand that there are reasons behind my wicked problem. In this source, *Brockington, Ariana*. “*Going to Concerts Is Good for Your Health (Study).*” *Variety*, *Variety*, 29 Mar. 2018, they want people to actually put themselves in this environment of live music and feel the stress go away. The article says that "When you're excited at a concert, your brain releases endorphins, neurotransmitters that block pain".

In my last source that I will be including, *Castaneda, Ruben*. “*6 Reasons Going to Concerts Is Good for Your Health.*” *U.S. News & World Report*, *U.S. News & World Report*, 26 Oct. 2016, there was a test on live music and mood changes that the article talks about. "The test subjects for the study participated in psychometric and heart-rate tests while performing multiple activities. While watching live music, feelings of self-worth and being close to others both improved by 25 percent. Mental stimulation was the most affected with an improvement by 75 percent". A 75% improvement of mental stimulation is crazy. As well as a 25% increase of feeling loved and worthy. This helps me prove my point even more by showing that real tests were taken and proven to be effective in a positive way. Overall, there are many resources out there to help me prove my point. Music has been such a positive outlet for so many people.

The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) has recommended many ways to help prevent the spread of Covid-19. Some of these have changed over the past year due to vaccines being distributed, but the 3 biggest ones that still remain in effect are mask wearing, social distancing, and washing your hands. Wearing a mask not only helps you protect yourself, but it helps you protect those around you in case you have the virus. Social distancing is a huge help because the farther away you are from someone, the less likely you will get the virus from them. Washing your hands has always been important, even before the pandemic. But just simply washing your hands with warm water and soap for just 20 seconds can help get the germs off your hands and maybe even the virus.

To discuss more on a personal level about how not having live music has affected my life, I am going to tell the story of when I flew to Fort Lauderdale, Florida just for a concert. Everyone thought I was crazy, but it was so much fun. It was summer of 2018, and the singer Harry Styles was on tour. Now my sister and I have been fans of his music since he was in the band One Direction. We have camped out to see him in New York on the Today Show, taken the train to see him at Madison Square Garden, but this time we wanted to step it up. I was only 16 at the time but I had a full-time babysitting job so I was able to pay for my own concert ticket, airplane ticket, and hotel room. Our parents also thought we were crazy, but they know that we are smart, safe, and just wanted us to have some fun. The concert was such a blast. We were right in front of the catwalk and just had such a fun time. Singing, dancing, not a care in the world. We even went to 3 more shows after that. I know you are probably thinking “Isn’t it just the same show with the same songs?”, which is true in a sense, but we love the music so much that we would go to 10 shows if given the chance. Not to mention he interacts with the crowd at each

show and can be very funny. Overall, it was such a great experience and well worth my babysitting money. It was a trip I will never forget!

The coronavirus has kept me from doing those kinds of things. Things I looked forward to. Sometimes I would not get back from a concert till 2am, and then have school the next day. Although I was tired, I would not trade it for the world! Virtual concerts are just not the same. I know they are the most we can do right now, but not having the crowd there, the energy, the lights, the vibrations, the food, and most of all the singing and dancing, it is just not the same.

To discuss solutions for this problem, obviously getting the vaccine is the biggest one. I am so thankful that with today's technology, we were able to develop vaccines so quickly. There are 3 types of vaccines available in the US for Covid-19. The Pfizer-BioNtech and Moderna vaccines, and the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. Penn Medicine states that "the Pfizer-BioNtech and Moderna vaccines both are mRNA vaccines, which work differently than many other types of vaccines. mRNA vaccines train your immune system to make antibodies for specific diseases without injecting the virus into your body. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is a vector vaccine. Vector vaccines use genetic material from the COVID-19 virus that is placed inside a weakened version of another virus, such as the virus that causes the common cold". The Pfizer-BioNtech and Moderna vaccines are 2 dose shots whereas the Johnson and Johnson vaccine is a one dose shot. The Pfizer-BioNtech and Moderna vaccines are considered to be 95% effective whereas the Johnson and Johnson vaccine is about 66% effective. Although the Johnson and Johnson vaccine is not as effective as Pfizer-BioNtech and Moderna vaccines, it still can protect you from Covid-19 and is well worth getting.

Other solutions include following all of the CDC guidelines. Other guidelines to follow include quarantining for 14 days if you have been exposed to Covid-19, and get tested, covering

your coughs and sneezes and then putting on a new mask, clean and disinfect tables, countertops, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks, and also monitor your daily health by taking your temperature and making sure you are not showing any symptoms of the virus. The scary thing about the virus is that you can have it and be asymptomatic. Meaning you show no symptoms at all. This means that if you are hanging out with friends without a mask on or not social distancing, you could spread the virus super easily. This is why it is important to get tested if you think you have been in an environment where Covid-19 was present.

Lastly, I am going to discuss music one more time. Music can be so beneficial to our mental health as I've discussed. But I want to paint a picture. Picture this moment. Waking up on a Friday morning after a long week of work or school, and you are going to a concert that night. You are super excited while getting ready for work, but still have to get through the day. Once the work day is over, you head home and change and then meet up with your friends and drive to the venue. Blasting the music artist's albums through the car's speakers while driving there. You park and head in with all of the other fans there. Everyone is so excited. You buy merchandise, some food, and head down to your seats. Finally, the lights go down, your heart starts racing, the music starts playing, and everyone is screaming. Then before you know it, there is the music artist on stage ready to perform. Ever since these tickets were bought you were so excited for this moment and it is finally here. That is what I am looking forward to most when the pandemic is over.

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