

During the first week of my self change project I monitored my stress levels and the way music effected the mental and physical aspects of stress. From monitoring this properly, I found that listening to music pleasing to me at the specifically different times I experienced stress did help reduce my internal feelings and physical changes. In carefully studying the various types of stress experienced I concluded that certain types of music more effectively reduced my stress and anxiety levels. The following paragraphs explain further the types of stress felt and the music that assisted in subsiding the symptoms of stress.

Stress can be felt in several different forms, included here are the following ways I experienced stress. This step was found to be particularly important in past studies to learn specific stress styles¹ and most importantly, what music reduced what symptoms of stress. There are six separate forms of stress that can be experienced. These are symptomatic in physical, behavioral, emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and relational aspects.

Physical symptoms I personally experienced were: headaches (specifically tension headaches), nausea, dizziness, sleep difficulties, tight neck and shoulders, racing heart, trembling hands, and restlessness. Behavioral symptoms I felt were: a definite excess in smoking, bossiness towards others, compulsive gum chewing, I became critical of others, grinding of my teeth so hard that I am forced to wear a mouthpiece at night, and an inability to finish what I start. Some of the emotional symptoms included: crying, anxiety, nervousness, boredom, edginess, overwhelming sense of pressure, overwhelming anger, being unhappy for no reason, and very testy. Cognitive symptoms that I felt were: trouble thinking clearly, forgetfulness, writers block, long-term memory loss, inability to make decisions, and constant excessive worry. Spiritual aspects of stress that I felt: doubt, unforgiving, apathy, and a strong feeling for the need to prove myself. Examples of relational symptoms included: isolation, intolerance, resentment, clamming up, nagging/whining, distrust, and less contact with friends.

The importance of identifying interpersonal feelings helps with deciding what music would be most effective in reducing stress. Here are my findings for different types of stress:

For most physical symptoms, I found that a calming music worked best these CD's give a good example of calming, relaxing music (from my collection): Enya, The Vienna Boy's Choir, Collage (A compilation of classical works proven in a psychologically monitored project found to greatly reduce anxiety. They are collections that are popping up at several doctor office waiting areas to calm the patients.), Sarah McLachlan, and the Moscow Boy's Choir. For behavioral aspects of stress, I found that listening to music with a 'Sing-a-long'¹ interface worked best. I concluded that this was for the following reasons: A. it kept my mouth busy, and B. it kept my mind off the overhead of stress. Good examples of 'Sing-a-long'¹ songs are ones from soundtracks such as Grease, Footloose, even Disney soundtracks were fun and kept me singing. For part of the emotional symptoms I would listen to calming music and the other part I would listen to fast paced music that expressed how I felt at that particular time. For example, when felt like crying, I found it best to listen to depressing music because the act of crying actually is a form of expression that can build up as easily as anger and can help you feel a great sense of release when you do cry. For the anger/edginess aspect I found that listening to fast-paced music such as Nine Inch Nails and Hole helped me to get the anger or other emotion out. I did get confused when studying cognitive, spiritual, and relational stress styles¹, however, I found that relaxing music such as classical, incorporated with stress reducing techniques such as meditation greatly lowered my levels of stress.

Throughout the duration of my self-change project I found that social support was virtually nilche. This was an independent study of my feelings and the actions I took my alleviate my feelings, not anyone else's. Stress styles and music for

reducing the symptoms are extremely individual. I also found that there was no specific time of music listening required due to the simple fact that stress and emotions are so variable. Listening to a set time of specific music daily would frustrate me more than anything due to the fact that it would just be one more thing to add to my already stressful life and, again, because of the variation. A good comparison would be that of music to medicine. If you have an upset stomach, you take a medicine suitable to your symptoms, you wouldn't take an antihistamine, and so forth....

My current status in stress reduction is really very interesting due to finals. I have never felt so stressful in my life. I am mostly feeling anger and edginess at the time and at this very moment, listening to music from the soundtrack Romeo and Juliet. Success of this project did not only include learning to control my stress levels, but I have found the topic interesting and am taking this into consideration for the future if I do become a psychiatrist. I applied extra research to this final report because I found it so interesting. This is certainly a skill I hope to carry into the future and I hope to share it with others as a personalized stress reducer, as stress is one of the most common illness inducers in today's society.

I haven't found noticeable change in my overall behavior, but my attitude is definitely turning another direction. In fact, one of my peers told me that she admired how I so easily disregarded¹ certain things that she could not. This was when I saw that it was really making a difference in my attitude. (this peer had no idea that I was working on this project) my motivation to finish school will always be the same. I know that I have to finish school to have a decent¹ future, but when I do experience the feelings of 'it's just too hard'² or 'I can't handle this much work'² I can use music to motivate my spiritual symptoms and get myself up and going again.

The whole theory of self-change taught me that almost anything is possible with a little motivation on my part. I feel that the skill of knowing how to change yourself is one that everyone should acquire. So many people are unhappy with things in their life that I feel that even the layman could understand that if she/he decided to change, she/he could. Future use of behavior change will most definitely come in handy. I already have a list of things I would like to change on my own time and knowing how and what to do will be more than enough motivation to get me going.

My major goals in this specific self-change project would be the reduction of anxiety and stress through music therapy. Hopefully this will follow me into the rest of my life, including stress in family life and in my chosen career. Secondary goals that I have acquired through study on the topic are actually using music therapy in my future career. To be specific, I would like to turn and use music along with psychodynamic therapy to help heal pediatric oncology patients.

At this time in my college career, I feel that I am fulfilling my goals, but certainly not to their best. Hopefully, through this and other self-change projects, I can prepare myself for today and the future. Self-change is, I found, something that can only continue in your life if you use it. If you do follow through, eventually, the change will become a part of you and not a simple behavior you don't like¹.

