

Music and Healing

I have been hearing a lot recently about the healing qualities of classical music. Apparently, water crystals form beautiful crystalline patterns when exposed to certain musical melodies from classical composers such as Beethoven and Mozart. I have not conducted any experiments myself, but I have seen the pretty snowflake like patterns that have been photographed to demonstrate this effect.

The water crystals, however, behave quite differently when they listen to more modern rap and/or rock music. I have not witnessed this myself or seen any pictures, just been told that the water crystal images under these circumstances are quite "disorganized" and even "ugly". The implication is that our bodies, like these water crystals, are affected by the type of music we listen to and that music such as the gentle classics are better for our health and wellness than the edgier, rawer, and more modern works. Furthermore, that there could be a detrimental effect on our cells and to our physical bodies to long term exposure to the type of music we might listen to at rock concerts, dance clubs, alternative radio stations, or on the collective ipod's of our youth.

As an individual who enjoys many different styles of music, dance, and self-expression I am not comfortable with what seems to me an unfair judgment and bias. Different music produces different effects. If we all go back into our ancestral past it was the wild beat of the drum (Europe, Asia, Africa & Americas) and didgeridoo (Australia) that was the healing instrument of our early doctors (aka shamans). A quick and earthy tempo (more Yin and feminine quality in nature) having the effect of breaking up stagnant, old energy and emotions as well as helping remove negative thoughts, patterns, perceptions and dis-ease held within the cellular memory of the client. Shamans danced and performed rituals to what might appear to be a more chaotic pattern of music to connect with universal energies of Nature and channel the needed vibrations to maintain the health and harmony of individuals in need as well as the community at large. As the strong beat and use of percussion instruments in some modern compositions has similarities to the rhythmic beat of shamanic sound healing perhaps there can also be positive benefits gained despite the disorganized effects on water crystals. It could be that the healing properties of different genres of music just work in different ways.

As a qigong teacher, I encourage my students to get into their bodies and to explore who they are through different styles of music and movement. Part of the journey involves working with the Metal element (think rocks and mountains) and Chinese Medicine Theory to facilitate releasing past limitations whether physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. Metal, associated with the season of autumn, is a time when trees let go of their leaves. They "fall" to the earth to transform into future nourishment for the roots of the tree. Similarly, modern, edgy (metal like), or rebellious tunes assist students in their process of letting go and transforming the traumas, tensions, and emotions in their bodies. Helping release old blocks stuck in their energy flow thereby allows additional vitality (jing qi) to nourish the roots or foundation of their own strength and vitality. In shamanic terms, it can facilitate the return of power and wholeness.

In closing, keep an open mind when it comes to music (and other things in life) and be mindful not to limit yourself or others. Listen and enjoy a variety of styles of music from different cultures and different periods be it relaxing, stirring, revitalizing, passionate, joyful, rebellious and/or playful. Discover and honor your own musical tastes appreciating different kinds of music when they work best for you (I like *Green Day* but prefer listening to Chopin during a massage for example). And as music is a metaphor for life - DANCE to the beat of your own drum with everything you do. ☺

Christina Bjergo, Licensed Acupuncturist, Shiatsu Practitioner & Qigong Instructor