

Notes of Positivity: A Musical Wellness Experience

Lesson developed by Angela Sorg, DeKalb County Indiana (Area 11)

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Lesson Overview:

- As we grow older, we often face unexpected challenges that can make daily life more difficult. These challenges may include serious illnesses, limited income after retirement, concerns for the well-being of our loved ones, mobility issues, or difficulties with hearing. It's no wonder that anxiety can become more prevalent as we age. In fact, anxiety disorders are the most common mental health condition among older adults, according to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America. It is estimated that around 14% to 17% of individuals aged 65 and older have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, although many cases go unnoticed. However, incorporating practical stress-relieving techniques, such as listening to music, can have a positive impact on our mood, reduce pain and anxiety, and provide opportunities for emotional expression. Research has shown that music can have numerous benefits for our physical and mental well-being.

Time Frame:

- This lesson can be taught in 30 minutes or 1 hour if you choose to do the activity.

Objectives:

- Define anxiety and stress
- Symptoms of anxiety and stress
- 9 Health Benefits of Music
- Fun musical activities to reduce anxiety & stress

Vision:

- Develop an understanding of how to incorporate music into everyday life to reduce anxiety and stress

Mission:

- Integrate music into your daily activities, keeping in mind its ability to alleviate stress and anxiety.

Anxiety Defined: Common Types of Anxiety Disorders and Their Symptoms

- **Panic Disorder:** Characterized by panic attacks, or sudden feelings of terror that strike repeatedly and without warning. Physical symptoms include chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness, abdominal discomfort, and fear of dying.
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder:** People with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) suffer from recurrent unwanted thoughts (obsessions) or rituals (compulsions), that they feel they cannot control. Rituals, such as hand washing, counting, checking, or cleaning, are often performed in hopes of preventing obsessive thoughts or making them go away.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder:** PTSD is characterized by persistent symptoms that occur after experiencing a traumatic event such as violence, abuse, natural disasters, or some other threat to a person's sense of survival or safety. Common symptoms include nightmares, flashbacks, numbing of emotions, depression, being easily startled, and feeling angry, irritable, or distracted.
- **Phobia:** An extreme, disabling, and irrational fear of something that poses little or no actual danger; the fear leads to avoidance of objects or situations and can cause people to limit their lives. Common phobias include agoraphobia (fear of the outside world); social phobia; fear of certain animals; driving a car; heights, tunnels, or bridges; thunderstorms; and flying.
- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder:** Chronic, exaggerated worry about everyday routine life events and activities, lasting at least six months; almost always anticipating the worst even though there is little reason to expect it. Accompanied by physical symptoms, such as fatigue, trembling, muscle tension, headache, or nausea.

Stress Defined: How is Stress Different from Anxiety and Stress Symptoms

- Stress is a normal physical, mental, and emotional reaction or response to the ever-increasing demands of life, including change.
- Stress can come from any event or thought that makes you feel intense emotion. Additionally, stress can also be perceived as positive or negative.
- Positive stress could include situations like a new job, retirement, wedding, or birth.
- Negative stress could consist of a life-threatening situation, the death of a loved one, hospitalization, etc.
- Overall, our perception determines how we view an event and how we choose to respond to it. On occasion, stress can be beneficial. It can challenge and motivate us, increasing our ability to be more resilient.
- For seniors, stress often manifests itself in more physical ways, including health problems. Warning signs of stress could include frequent headaches, sleep problems, insomnia, fatigue (physical and mental), difficulty concentrating, change in appetite, muscle tension, pain, chest pain, stomach upset, and more.
- People under stress experience mental and physical symptoms, such as irritability, anger, fatigue, muscle pain, digestive troubles, and difficulty sleeping.
- Anxiety, on the other hand, is defined by persistent, excessive worries that do not go away even in the absence of a stressor.
- If your stress and/or anxiety interfere with your ability to live, laugh, love, and play the way you wish, this could be a sign of a larger mental health issue. Please talk with your doctor or healthcare provider if your symptoms become problematic.

9 Health Benefits of Music

- **It's heart-healthy.** Research has shown that blood flows more easily when music is played. It can also reduce heart rate, lower blood pressure, decrease cortisol (stress hormone) levels, and increase serotonin and endorphin levels in the blood.
- **It elevates mood.** Music can boost the brain's production of the hormone dopamine. This increased dopamine production helps relieve feelings of anxiety and depression. Music is processed directly by the amygdala, which is the part of the brain involved in mood and emotions.
- **It reduces stress.** Research has found that listening to music can relieve stress by triggering biochemical stress reducers.
- **It relieves symptoms of depression.** When you're feeling down in the dumps, music can help pick you up - much like exercise.
- **It stimulates memories.** There is no cure for Alzheimer's disease or dementia but music therapy has been shown to relieve some of its symptoms. Music therapy can relax an agitated patient, improve the mood, and open communication in patients.
- **It manages pain.** By reducing stress levels and providing a strong competing stimulus to the pain signals that enter the brain, music therapy can assist in pain management.
- **It eases pain.** Music can meaningfully reduce the perceived intensity of pain, especially in geriatric care, intensive care, or palliative medicine.
- **It helps people eat less.** Playing soft music in the background (and dimming the lights) during a meal can help people slow down while eating and ultimately consume less food in one sitting.
- **It increases workout endurance.** Listening to those top workout tracks can boost physical performance and increase endurance during a tough exercise session.

Fun musical activities to reduce anxiety & stress

- **Sing:** Singing is a wonderful activity that anyone can enjoy, regardless of whether they consider themselves a "singer" or not. It is amazing how many benefits singing can bring into our lives. Singing is quite similar to exercise in many ways. Just like exercise, singing is an aerobic activity that increases oxygen flow in our blood, leading to better circulation and an improved mood. Singing also triggers the release of endorphins, which can give us that amazing feeling of being uplifted and can even help relieve stress. Additionally, since singing requires deep breathing, it often helps reduce anxiety naturally. You don't need any special equipment or training to start singing. Simply turn on a song and sing along! If you want to take it a step further, consider learning the lyrics of a few songs together so you can sing them a cappella when you don't have access to music. And if you're looking for a more formal way to incorporate singing into your life, you can join a choir, take voice lessons, or even explore music therapy services. The possibilities are endless when it comes to singing, so let your voice be heard, and enjoy all the amazing benefits it brings!
- **Play:** Engaging in instrument play can be a delightful experience that allows for creativity and self-expression, while also encouraging physical activity. Whether you choose to play alone or with accompanying music, the possibilities are endless. Even if you have no prior knowledge or experience, you can easily pick up small percussion instruments like maracas and start playing along to your favorite tunes. So go ahead, turn on some music, let loose, and enjoy the joy of jamming out with your instruments.
- **Dance:** Music serves as a natural source of motivation for the physical body. Many individuals

effortlessly synchronize their movements with the rhythm of a song by tapping their toes or nodding their heads along to the beat. At times, we engage in this behavior without even consciously realizing it! Dance and movement are instinctive reactions of the body to rhythm. Therefore, switch on some music and let yourself dance! While it can be beneficial to select songs that are familiar or well-known, don't hesitate to explore new and different genres of music. You never know what new songs or styles you may discover. To stimulate your thoughts, here are a few genres of music that you could dance to: big band, jazz, rock'n'roll, folk, bluegrass, country/western, classical, rhythm and blues, gospel, pop, Broadway showtunes, soul, funk, disco...and the list goes on! However, don't limit yourself to formal dances like the waltz, tango, or cha-cha-cha as the only means of moving your body to music. Try inventing your own dance moves, or simply embrace the music and sway together, or face each other and engage in seated movements to the rhythm. Experiment with stretching, exercising, or even incorporating rhythmic body percussion such as clapping, snapping, patting, stomping, kicking, tapping, marching, shaking, waving, and so on. Let your creativity flow!

- **Listen and Remanence:** Listening to music can provide immense enjoyment and can be a standalone activity in itself. Discover a playlist that you find pleasing, or curate your own personalized collection. Engaging in music can be a wonderful way to relax or stimulate your brain. It can be a passive experience where you simply listen and absorb the melodies or an active one where you delve into the lyrics and various aspects of the music, such as the sound, emotions conveyed, and the different instruments utilized. There is no right or wrong approach to experiencing music; do what brings you the most pleasure and suits your preferences. Furthermore, music serves as an excellent accompaniment to various tasks like cleaning, cooking, running errands, or engaging in art projects. However, it is important to exercise caution and avoid over-stimulation when using music in this manner. Certain activities demand focused attention, and certain types of music can overwhelm the brain with excessive stimuli. It is advisable to match the musical energy to the energy level required for the activity. Instrumental music or tracks without lyrics can be particularly suitable when you and your loved one need to converse during the task. Moreover, music possesses the remarkable ability to evoke memories and facilitate reminiscence. Begin by selecting songs that are associated with positive and significant moments. Observe your reactions as you listen.
- **Relax:** Music has the power to bring us relaxation and peace. Each of us has our own preferences when it comes to calming music, and these preferences may change over time. It is important for you to choose music that brings a sense of calmness. We can use music as a tool for relaxation by incorporating deep breathing, gentle stretching, guided relaxation, and meditation. There are various techniques for each of these but do not worry too much about the specifics. Start by experimenting with using music to aid in relaxation and see how it feels, then go from there. If you are unsure about what type of music to play during intentional relaxation, you can try searching for playlists that spas use during treatments like massage therapy. Nature sounds or ambient music can be particularly effective in calming the mind and body.
- **Write A Song:** Songwriting involves various steps such as selecting a song structure, writing lyrics, composing a melody, and adding harmony or accompaniment. It is not necessary to be a musician to write a song, so do not feel overwhelmed by the process. Crafting a song can be an enjoyable and straightforward task for anyone. For instance, you can try creating a short melody to hum, writing lyrics, or making a song parody by changing the words of an existing song. Do not stress about music theory, song structure, chord progressions, or other formal aspects of songwriting. Simply let your creativity flow!

Remember to document your song in some form, whether by writing it down or recording a quick voice memo. You can also collaborate on a full-length song with a partner. This collaboration can take a few hours, weeks, or even months as an ongoing project. If either of you plays an instrument, it can aid in developing the melody and chords.

- **Capture and Record:** This is a simple activity. It is a reminder to capture those moments of making music! You could use the voice memo app on your phone, or your phone's camera to record a video, or write down a special moment in a notebook. To take it a step further, share it with friends and family. They will appreciate it, and you will be grateful for capturing those special, memorable moments.
- **Make and Instrument:** Making an instrument allows for creativity, thought processing, and memory. You can be creative and see what you can make with items lying around the house.

How to Make Homemade Maracas

Prep

20 mins, plus drying time

You will need

- Disposable wooden spoons
- Acrylic or poster paints
- Fillable plastic eggs
- Uncooked rice or dried lentils
- PVA glue
- Colorful washi tape or ribbon

Method

1. Paint the wooden spoons and allow to dry.
2. Place a couple of spoonful's of rice or dried lentils into the egg and close it.
3. Glue the spoons to either side of the egg – line up the spoons so that the handles meet at the end. Let the glue dry.
4. Stick a strip of colorful tape or ribbon over the join of the egg. Wrap some more tape or ribbon around the handles to hold them together. Allow to dry if using glue. Your maracas are now ready to shake, rattle and roll!



Conclude

If you have feedback, questions, or concerns, please contact your local Health & Human Sciences Extension Educator for more research-based information on how to incorporate music into everyday life. Purdue Extension appreciates all input when providing programming. Thank you!

Acknowledgments

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IEHA Program Lesson Submission

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Topic Description: (Information should be researched, educational, approved for use (if you are not the author, seek approval from materials author), and presented in a format that would allow an individual to read, study, and teach to other peers. All copyright issues should be resolved before submission.)	<p>As we grow older, we often face unexpected challenges that can make daily life more difficult. These challenges may include serious illnesses, limited income after retirement, concerns for the well-being of our loved ones, mobility issues, or difficulties with hearing. It's no wonder that anxiety can become more prevalent as we age. In fact, anxiety disorders are the most common mental health condition among older adults, according to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America. It is estimated that around 14% to 17% of individuals aged 65 and older have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, although many cases go unnoticed. However, incorporating practical stress-relieving techniques, such as listening to music, can have a positive impact on our mood, reduce pain and anxiety, and provide opportunities for emotional expression. Research has shown that music can have numerous benefits for our physical and mental well-being.</p>

Short Goal/Objective Statement for Lesson:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Define anxiety and stress○ Symptoms of anxiety and stress○ 9 Health Benefits of Music○ Fun musical activities to reduce anxiety and stress
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