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The Power of Music

Music is everywhere. Someone can hear music on the radio, on a phone, on the television, or even in a classroom. Music is a powerful thing when it comes to the brain. It is a strong factor in brain development, and it can help the brain grow stronger. The brain is one of the most complex organs in the body, and music can expand the mind's ability to comprehend material. Although our brain develops with age, music can help it grow in many ways. Playing an instrument, using music therapy, applying music to child development, and listening to music that reflects one's emotional state can all affect the brain as it develops.

One way that music can help develop the brain is through playing an instrument. This specific activity uses every part of an individual's brain. Any instrument that a person plays will help in developing the brain. Eric Jensen says, "playing an instrument over time can literally remap the brain's 'real estate'" (12). What he means by this claim is that when a person learns to play an instrument, that person will use all of his or her brain. Playing an instrument is basically exercise for the brain, and it helps specific parts of the brain that normally are not used grow stronger. The brain has many ways of learning and storing information. If someone repeats an action, like playing an instrument, that action will cause the brain to "respond more quickly to that stimulus, enhancing learning, retention, and recall" (Curtis and Fallin 53). Many band directors and music instructors want people to learn to play an instrument because it helps their brain strengthen in many different basic skills like reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

Also, research has shown that music does not specifically use the left or right hemisphere. Music is so complex that the brain will use both hemispheres when a person plays an instrument (Curtis and Fallin 53). Learning to play an instrument can lead to more than just being able to read music. It can also help a person become a better problem solver because music has helped strengthen the brain.

Music therapy can be used to help promote a patient's emotional, physical, or mental state. Many music therapists help patients who have been in accidents, or they might help older people who have dementia, like the man whom Steven Matthews studied named Henry. Henry has dementia, he is usually unresponsive, and most of the time he cannot recognize his daughter. However, when Henry's therapist lets him listen to music that he listened to when he was young, "he is ignited, sitting up, [and] he begins to move to the music" as if he never had dementia (Matthews 575). Music therapy has helped him to regain some of his life. This kind of therapy helps patients' mental illnesses, and they can remember a little more when they hear this music. Matthews explains that there is an increase in dementia patients in the nation, and doctors are wanting to find a lower cost of medicine or therapy to help them. When the doctors found out that music therapy can help patients with this illness, they wanted to send music therapists everywhere (Matthews 579). Music therapy is a big factor in brain development because it allows patients to regain strength that they might have once lost.

A child's brain has a lot of room for growth in the early stages of its life, and music can help the brain of a child to grow. The brain consists of millions of neurons that all have different functions. Studies show that when a person listens to music, those neurons will fire up and become active throughout the whole brain (Jensen 8). A researcher did a study on a well-known violinist and found that the "area of the brain responsible for hearing reception was twice as thick"

(Jensen 12). This violinist had been listening to music and playing since he was a child, so music helped the brain to become stronger in the hearing section. Many mothers think that letting their baby listen to music while in the womb can be helpful for their babies, and they are right. A baby can hear some things in the womb, so playing music for the baby can already start the process of brain development. Music can help in children's test scores too. A group of students who had taken at least two years of music lessons and had music class at school "scored significantly higher on the composite mathematics portion of the Iowa Test." Starting children in music at a young age can help them to become better students by developing specific parts in the brain that will allow them to excel in life. Another reason teachers use songs in the classroom is that the students are more likely to remember the tune of the song rather than a long definition of a word; remaking a song to tell a student what a word means is a good way to help develop the long-term memory of the brain (Tate 68). Neuroscientist Devarajan Sridharan explains that when people listen to music, it "enhances our ability to anticipate events and sustain attention while listening" (qtd. in Curis and Fallin 53). Thus, music can help by increasing a student's attention span, which will give the student the ability to pay attention to something longer. Children can even make music fun and interesting by learning about old music. Mac Randall explains in his article that children who learn about the history of music can benefit from it because they will have more appreciation for that type of music. Also, they can eventually connect new music and old music because old music is the rock that the new music stands on (30). Music can come in all different types of categories, but they can all help in child development in some way.

The brain can develop by the way someone feels. If people are sad, then they may not retain a lot of information, and if they are happy, then they may be able to retain more. Different

songs can change the way a person feels. Music can also help a person's emotional state. A teacher from Washington, D.C. says she likes to teach rock music because it "engages young people and gets them enthusiastic" about music (Randall 30). Listening to music can "change one's state of mind," and it can make someone happy, sad, excited, or even anxious (Curtis and Fallin 54). Everyone knows that music can change the mood of a person. For example, if a student has a bad day at school, he or she can go and listen to some music that is upbeat and happy to perk the student up. Also, if someone hears a specific song at a funeral or somewhere sad and then hears it again later in life, that song might trigger sadness, and that person might start crying because of the song. Music has a big impact in everyone's life, and it can affect someone's emotional state. Marcia Tate even says that music "is a powerful carrier of signals that activate emotion" (68). Another way that music can affect emotions is through grief. When people experience grief, they tend to listen to what they perceive as a sad song. Listening to these types of songs can be a "safer form of anger," and eventually this sad music can help the person's mental health too ("Turn" 8). Music has a huge impact on one's emotional state, and the type of songs that person listens to can determine the kind of day that individual will have.

Music, in a way, has super powers. It can show its powers through the development of the brain. Playing an instrument, music therapy, child development, and a person's emotional state can have a vital impact on the way a person's brain grows. The brain is a complex organ, and music is a major factor in the development of this complex organ.

Works Cited

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