



The Wellness Wire

Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine

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An initiative of the Faculty Assembly Steering Committee, the Office of Medical Student Support Services, the Fit & Well Committee, the Assistant Dean of Faculty Development, and the Division of Education and Faculty Development in the Department of Humanities, Health, and Society.

Greetings as we all learn to reframe our lives during these unprecedented times. Recognizing that figuring out how to work from home can be challenging, the Faculty Assembly Steering Committee has launched this initiative to provide resources for faculty and staff to foster our collective well-being.

Editor: Greg Schneider, MD

The Music of the Spheres

My wife works for a non-profit immigration law firm. As you might imagine, times are tough for such an organization. About a month ago, she wanted to repaint her office at work, but there were no funds available. So we decided to take the project on ourselves. Armed with face masks, paint, brushes, tarps, other painting accoutrements purchased at Home Depot, and clothes we didn't mind getting tarnished, we spent one Saturday redoing the office in new coats of pure white. I have always found physical work like painting itself therapeutic, but there was one piece of the puzzle that made the whole experience. We brought music to our little do-it-yourself day. "Killing Me Softly," "The Rhythm of the Night," and other classics from our 90s dance music mix somehow transformed the event. Music, it seems, has the capability to alter events, moods, appetites, physical spaces, you name it.

In the Renaissance, when all life in the West took on new levels of complexity, many leading intellectuals of the day were convinced the key to the whole

structure of the universe lay in music, the "Music of the Spheres." Music, with its mathematical underpinning and its transcendent power, combined with its physicality, struck philosophers and poets alike as a leading candidate for the force that animated the cosmos. The musicians of the day, spurred by the intellectual and artistic rebirth surrounding them, began experimenting. They even started making use of the dreaded "tritone," also known as the Devil's interval. (Think "dunh-dunh" from Jaws or just about any horror film.) They also invented what comes to be known as counterpoint, which lays the groundwork for all musical harmony and disharmony that follows in the Western World.

Unleashing consonance, dissonance, and the tritone also unleashed the full emotional power of music, leading through a very tortuous history to the wide range of music today. Whether you are drawn to hip-hop, techno, punk, or country music yourself, that music all has some of its roots in those heady Renaissance days. Faced as we are by so many challenges, from a pandemic to an economic slowdown to the dangers of stay-at-home isolation, the current era shares odd resonances with the centuries just before, during, and after the Renaissance. Such upheaval might just spur another worldwide rebirth, and I suspect that music will play a role, heralding the change.

More locally, music may foster rebirths in your own world. Perhaps you need a change in mood, or a way to relax, or a way to motivate. Perhaps you have an urge to express yourself. During these times of upheaval, we have some ideas on the next page on ways that music can help comfort and shape our lives.

Don't forget about our interactive [Wellness Wall](#).



Resources and Reflections for a Musical Reset

[The Music of Medicine: Physician Playlists](#) and [The Music of Medicine: Physician Playlists 2](#) are two pretty fabulous articles! In these articles, Cedars-Sinai doctors shared some of their favorite tracks, or playlists as they are now called!) that get them ready to work, along with their thoughts on what these songs bring to the operating table. The first article highlights playlists by men surgeons and the second details the playlists of women surgeons.

"For me, music is a wonderful surrogate for feeling emotions. If I need to process the feelings from a difficult day, I can tap into those feelings through a well-chosen playlist accompanied by journaling or heavy cardio. When I want a pick me up, my happy and empowering playlist serves me well!"
--Suzanne Minor, MD

"Whenever I feel stressed or overwhelmed, I always turn to jazz piano to become centered and present in the current moment. One of my favorite jazz pianists is Oscar Peterson, due to the emotion and passion he puts into each of his recordings. I suggest listening to the song 'Blue and Sentimental' by Oscar Peterson, a slow swing that will allow the listener to imagine taking a stroll through a rainy city."
– Trevor Sterling, medical student

"Listening to songs from my childhood and college days makes current problems and the world melt away momentarily. Singing songs I grew up with gives me a warm, fuzzy feeling and like a time machine takes me back to the "good old days". A few of my favorites are 'Survivor' by Destiny's Child, 'Payphone' by Maroon 5, and 'Suit & Tie' by Justin Timberlake."
--Priya Shil, medical student

"Music is one of those things that can take me someplace and sometime else... when I am missing the places of my youth, and can't go back because of the pandemic, listening to music from that time and place help soothe my heart and soul. Some of my favorite artists and songs

include Blue Rodeo – '5 Days in May,' Barenaked Ladies – 'One Week' and 'Pinch Me,' Gordon Lightfoot – 'The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald,' k.d. lang – 'Hallelujah,' Jeff Healey – 'Angel Eyes,' Great Big Sea – 'When I'm Up.' The lyrics are thoughtful and clever, and the melodies take my mind off of my worries and frustrations. Some are slow and sad, others are fast and fun, and they all take me back to a different time and place."
--Tracey Weiler, PhD

"I love music! It has always been a big part of who I am. My favorite wellness activity during the pandemic has been to put on a playlist of rockin' dance tunes and get in the pool and just move...no one is watching (I hope). When I am feeling a little low or stressed, I have a playlist that has primarily meditation music and binaural beats. When this is all over, I am looking forward to getting back to one of my favorite activities...getting out there and listening to live bands."
--Heidi von Harscher, PhD

How many times must a man look up
Before he can see the sky?
Yes, 'n' how many ears must a man have
Before he can hear people cry?
Yes, 'n' how many deaths will it take till he knows
That too many people have died?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

How many years can a mountain exist
Before it's washed to the seas?
Yes, 'n' how many years can some people exist
Before they're allowed to be free?
Yes, 'n' how many times can a man turn his head,
Pretending he just doesn't see?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.
--Bob Dylan, 1962

