

Heidi Hatch

Set Your Life To Music

When I think of health, I think not just of my body but of my mind. The older I get, the more I recognize the connection among body, mind and soul. Being in a good mood can literally make you physically feel better, just as a bad day, stress or worries can literally make you sick.

So what do you do when you need to feel better? I have one foolproof plan. No matter what my mood is, I can usually think of a song that fits it, adding to the moment or changing it when needed. Music is my "mental medicine."

After a stressful day at work, I can jump in my car and turn on one of my Josh Groban CDs and instantly relax. His liquid voice and powerful melodies can help unclench my jaw and relax the tension in my shoulders. I can't explain why his songs, many of which are in languages that I don't even understand, can make me feel so at ease.

Just as Josh Groban's lifting melodies can brush away the stresses of the day, another song can just as easily invigorate. There's nothing like a little old school Madonna to give me energy when all I need is a nap. A church hymn can give comfort when it seems as though I'm all alone. U2's "With or Without You" and Depeche Mode's "Somebody" jolt me back to my teenage years when I was pining away for my Mr. Wonderful. The sounds of Journey now remind me of my husband and the first song we danced to at our wedding. Sarah McLachlan's "Angel" makes me cry because it was playing in my hospital room when my daughter was born.

So what does this walk down my musical memory lane have to do with my health and yours? In my mind, a lot. Emotions—good and bad—contribute to our well-being or lack thereof. Music is literally the soundtrack to our own, very different lives. A good composer can make you feel fear and anxiety, foreshadow impending doom or cause a rush of emotions from tears to joy. Think about it: Most of our favorite movies would be terribly lacking without music.

Music has always been a part of my life. Summer road trips as a young child were filled with Kenny Rogers, Ann Murray and Barbara Streisand tapes. Nights out with the family were at the theatre where musicals were always fun, whether we



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and "Good Day" 8:30 - 10 am

were watching in the audience or singing and dancing in them ourselves. The school year at my house always meant music lessons.

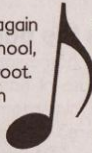
I think I've mentioned my piano lessons before. Everyone in my family was expected to play the piano—no exceptions. I, unlike my sisters, never really excelled at the piano. I tried, but my brain and two little hands just never seemed to get their act together. After years of miserable practice hours with my mom by my side, we came to an agreement. I could quit playing the piano, but I would have to pick another instrument. I chose the flute, and somehow everything clicked. It was easy—I loved it.

I never really understood as a child why mom was so adamant that my five siblings and I play an instrument. Now, a mother myself, I think that I finally understand her reasoning. Playing an instrument is good practice for being an adult. Learning something new isn't always easy, and it's not always fun. The daily practices teach discipline, and the fruits of your child's labors can help give him or her confidence. Music is also, and maybe most importantly, an emotional outlet. It can be an emotional release that gives your kids a way to express their feelings, relax and find something that makes them feel good about themselves. While your child may not know or recognize it now, music can build his or her self-worth and also translate to a healthy physical well-being.

My 9-year-old daughter started playing the violin when she was 7, and the progress she's made in two short years is nothing short of amazing. As her mother, I am admittedly biased, but she really is getting very good. Even better, she loves playing. It helps that her teacher is kind, gentle and very good at what she does. She encourages and teaches through years of wisdom. When my daughter started, she asked how many days she should practice. The teacher's answer was simple: "Only the days you eat." According to her teacher, music should be a part of every day.

As the Hatch family heads full steam back into the school year, it's not always easy to squeeze in the daily practices, but I feel like it's worth it. While music may not be right for every child, I can tell you the benefits can be felt through the entire family.

Science has proven the link time and time again that play an instrument and kids that do well in school, in math and sciences. Music is science at its very root. Every song requires exactness and control. Music is math simply by its rhythms and beats that must be kept track of in your head with no time to work out the fractions on paper. You could also argue that music teaches foreign languages with its terms in Italian, German and French. It's also a workout that requires perfect body positioning, hand-eye coordination, endurance, and in many cases, breath control. While all of these are important and good for your child, none compare to the sheer



fact that music brings joy and can bring happiness to your child.

There's a quote my daughter's violin teacher gave me that I love. The author is unknown, but the thought bears repeating for those who love music, teach music and those who are ready to learn.



Why do we teach music?

*Not because we expect you to major in music
Not because we expect you to play or sing all your life.*

But

So you will be human

So you will recognize beauty

So you will be closer to an infinite beyond this world

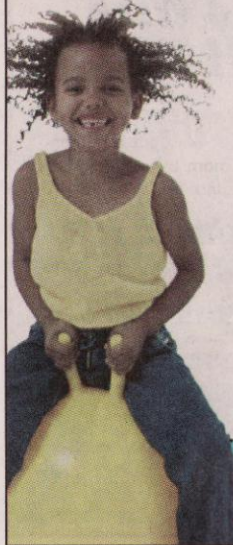
So you will have something to cling to

*So you will have more love, more compassion, more gentleness,
more good—in short, more life.*



How important is music to your family? Discuss it with other moms at Orlando.MomsLikeMe.com

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