

Soothing Music For Those With Hearing Loss

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I grew up with parents who loved music. My dad was a fan of Hank Williams and Patsy Cline. My mom enjoyed Beethoven, Johnny Cash, and the Beatles. When cooking or doing housework, she would put on an album, saying listening to music made chores easier. You might say I was raised on the idea that music is distracting, soothing, and supportive.

To this day, I find music uplifting. Because of my hearing loss, I tend to suffer from anxiety. Playing Debussy's *Reverie*, Chopin's *Nocturne*, or Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* helps me relax. Lively tunes from The Beach Boys, The Temptations, or the Beatles turn back the clocks to my youth. Also, these are great songs to dance to, thus providing an opportunity to exercise.

I feel fortunate to have a music setting on my aids. I switch to it when listening to music in my car or when attending a concert in a building that doesn't have a hearing loop. This wonderful option partially cancels surrounding background noise, allowing the music to surround me. Additionally, my Bluetooth-enabled hearing devices allow me to stream music directly from my phone or pad.

Unfortunately, most wearers of aids and implants will say music sounds tinny and mechanical. One implant wearer told me that to him musical notes sound artificial, like the sounds coming from an old-fashioned squeaky microphone. No one wants to listen to music that way.

There is hope to all music lovers. You can train your brain to hear music more naturally. I spoke to my audiologist to get pointers about listening to music with aids and implants. Having well-adjusted hearing devices is key. Patience and practice is required. He recommended going online to find a musical piece to which you are familiar. Listen to that piece over and over. Once you feel that you hear the song normally, move to listening with multiple instruments. Frequent

listening will allow your brain to adjust.

Lyrics are a problem. However, most of the words to your favorite songs can be found online. I've downloaded quite a few and find myself singing along with some of my favorite artists.

Listening to music regularly can be a pathway to better hearing. My audiologist suggests that it is very easy to isolate in a quiet home. Playing music can improve your listening skills in background noise, and it can familiarize your brain to various sounds thus improving your overall hearing.

As the holidays approach, you might find yourself planning a party or traveling. If you have not immersed yourself in background noise for a while, the sudden onslaught of city noise or a chorus of voices may leave you unnerved. A few hours of daily music immersion might help you better adjust to environmental noise.

The lovely holiday season is forthcoming. There is a never ending supply of holiday music, both classical and popular, to suit most every occasion. Recognize that your favorite tunes may not sound normal, but listening to music daily can help you concentrate and improve your ability to have sustainable conversations when out and about. With your favorite holiday tunes, playing in the background, practice conversing at home with your loved ones. Immerse yourself in what you consider relaxing sounds. Let delightful melodies ease your way as you meander through the hearing world during this lovely time of year.