

Music and Health: A Phenomenological Approach

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Abstract

Music's positive impact on human health is well documented. Much of our data, however, only peripherally addresses listener perception and experience. This paper argues that music's relationship to health will be best understood, and music's curative potential more fully realized, by embracing a phenomenological approach focused on the dynamic and ever-shifting experience of active listening and musical embodiment. I advocate developing modes of scholarly inquiry and therapeutic practice that are artistic and individually focused, while also being empirically rich and replicable. In conceiving this approach, I draw from a range of sources, including: Goethe's nature studies, William T. Powers' Perceptual Control Theory, current thinking in health psychology, and my own experience using music in stroke recovery.