

Candidate Interest #2

The Role of Music in our Lives: How it pertains to Meaning, Music Therapy, and associated Neural Pathways

Music is enjoyed by everyone in some capacity, whether it be singing, playing an instrument, listening to music on a device or at a concert, composing music, or collectively performing music at a concert.

The construction/representation of meaning from music varies significantly among individuals, depending on prior experiences with music, the quality of exposure to music through family, friends, and teachers, and the memories associated with musical genres.

Different musical genres elicit different emotions, influenced by an individual's mood prior to listening (or playing), associated memories, and contextual influences. Music can be used to mentally prepare an athlete for competition, to set the mood during a long car ride, to enhance mood during an intensive workout, or to calm the mind and body during meditation.

This project will endeavor to explore how and why individuals listen to, compose, and practice music. In particular, therapeutic music interventions will be investigated, which can be used to aid individuals in achieving personal goals, such as stress management, pain alleviation, the promotion of relaxation during a therapy session, the expression of difficult feelings and emotions, communication enhancement, and memory enhancement. The neural pathways involved in music comprehension and performance will also be investigated.