

Music through sport – jymmin improves your mood

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"Jymmin" is a combination of "jamming" and "gym", a mixture of free musical improvisation and sports. The training with jymmin machines is more effective than with traditional fitness equipment and mood-enhancing. Credit: MPI f. Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences/ Fritz

Working out and making music at the same time – scientists at the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Leipzig retrofitted conventional fitness machines to produce music during a workout. Not only do these "jymmin" machines reduce physical exertion during exercise. The researchers have now proven that they also have a mood-enhancing effect: After strength training with musical feedback, a

person's mood improves significantly. It appears that hormones are responsible for this beneficial effect on mood.

When using jymmin machines, people participating in sports activities become composers during their workouts, controlling the [music](#) they create. The name is a combination of "jamming" and "gym". "We are using jymmin machines in our research in order to discover more about the beneficial effects of music-induced ecstasy," explains Thomas Fritz of the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Science.

For the study, the participants were first asked to fill out a standardized medical questionnaire about their mental state. Then they were asked to choose between fitness machines such as a stomach trainer, a weight tower, or a stepper, and initiate a ten-minute workout. One group did their first workout on conventional fitness machines while listening passively to music. The second group started with the jymmin machines and actively produced music while they were exercising. After the first workout, the participants once again recorded their [mood](#) on a questionnaire, and then swapped with the other group for a second ten-minute workout.

The results recorded by the Leipzig-based researchers show that active music-making during [physical exertion](#) improves mood to a far greater extent than passive music listening. When the participants began their workout on the jymmin machines they retained their [good mood](#) even after the second workout during which they listened to music passively. As hormones have a long-lasting effect on mood, they are likely to be responsible for this effect. "When the participants worked out as usual while listening passively to music and then switched to jymmin, their mood improved dramatically. We believe that this is due to the release of endorphins," says Fritz.

Thus, not only does jymmin reduce exertion during a workout, as the

researchers in Leipzig discovered in a previous study. The current study suggests that the technique may be suitable for mood-enhancing self therapy. "As a result," continues Fritz, "we now want to investigate how we can use music to treat such conditions as motivational deficits and depression."

More information: Thomas Hans Fritz, Johanna Halfpaap, Sophia Grahl, Ambika Kirkland and Arno Villringer, Musical feedback during exercise machine workout enhances mood, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2014

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