

Even on 'down' days, music a motivator for runners

June 25 2021



The key to pushing through mental fatigue while running might be

adding some earbuds to your workout gear.

U.K. researchers worked with 18 fitness enthusiasts to determine the impact of [music](#) on running performance. They found that running to self-selected tunes improved runners' performance when mentally fatigued during two separate tests.

"Mental fatigue is a common occurrence for many of us, and can negatively impact many of our day-to-day activities, including exercise," said study author Shaun Phillips, of the University of Edinburgh's Moray House School of Education and Sport.

The first test looked at the effects on interval running capacity—alternating between high-intensity running and lower-intensity jogging—on nine physically active exercisers. The second test involved a 3-mile time trial with nine runners.

The groups completed a 30-minute computer-based cognitive test that put them in a mentally fatigued state before completing high-intensity exercise. Researchers tested the runners both with and without self-selected motivational music after assisting the participants with a pre-[test](#) questionnaire that asked them to rate the rhythm, style, melody, tempo, sound and beat of the music.

Songs included Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger," Kanye West's "Power" and Queens of the Strong Age's "No One Knows."

The researchers found the interval running capacity among the mentally fatigued fitness enthusiasts was greater with music compared to without music. It was the same as when the participants were not mentally fatigued.

The 3-mile time trial performances also showed small improvements

with self-selected music versus no music.

The positive effects of music could potentially be due to altered perception of effort when listening to tunes, researchers said. This presents an opportunity for further study on how listening to music while running affects other groups of people, as well as in different exercise challenges. Research is ongoing at the University of Edinburgh.

"The findings indicate that listening to self-selected motivational music may be a useful strategy to help active people improve their endurance running capacity and performance when mentally fatigued," Phillips said in a university news release. "This positive impact of self-selected music could help people to better maintain the quality and beneficial impact of their [exercise](#) sessions."

The study was published online recently in the *Journal of Human Sport and Exercise*.

More information: Time magazine suggests the [50 best workout songs](#).

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Citation: Even on 'down' days, music a motivator for runners (2021, June 25) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-06-days-music-runners.html>

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