

Focused listening study explores the healing charms of music

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[New research](#) published in *Musicae Scientiae* reveals people who focus deeply on music can have strong emotional reactions—across the full range of emotions—that can have significant therapeutic benefits.

James Cook University psychology lecturer Dr. Amanda Krause led the

study. She said most everyday [music](#) listening is accompanied by other activities and it is far less common that listening is someone's primary activity, receiving most of their attention.

"But in the Listen Up experience, run by Indigo Project, a mental health organization in Sydney, people go into a studio where the lights are dimmed and they lie down on cushions and mats and listen to music for about 50 minutes," said Dr. Krause.

The researchers interviewed nearly 190 participants and analyzed their responses.

JCU's Dr. Madelyn Pardon, co-author of the study, said people experienced an increased mood and decreased levels of stress and arousal after taking part. But it was not simply a matter of people enjoying the music.

"We found people's emotional responses across the range: negative, positive, evocative and expressive, and sad.

"Some people reported the experience as being emotionally challenging, therapeutic, and physically uncomfortable," said Dr. Pardon.

The researchers said participants characterized their [experiences](#) as a cathartic journey resulting in a positive, peaceful, and calm state.

"Our research provides evidence for the emotional and [mental health benefits](#) of focused music listening. This type of listening is unusual in today's music landscape and provides opportunities for meaningful experiences," said Dr. Krause.

She said people may find they can better manage their own well-being by learning to use focused music listening techniques to complement

their usual, everyday listening practices.

More information: Amanda E. Krause et al, Listen Up: A case study examination of focused listening, *Musicae Scientiae* (2023). [DOI: 10.1177/10298649231203628](https://doi.org/10.1177/10298649231203628)

Provided by James Cook University

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