

Music for mental health

with Professor Gilles Comeau

Talking points

Knowledge

1. What physical and mental health conditions can be improved by engaging with music?
2. What physiological markers can measure someone's anxiety levels?

Comprehension

3. How can collective music-making benefit people with mental health conditions?
4. Why does Gilles want to integrate the music education technique, Dalcroze Eurythmics, into healthcare?

Application

5. Questionnaires, in which participants 'self-report' on their conditions, are useful tools for assessing mental health, but are sometimes criticised for not being a rigorous scientific methodology. What do you think are the potential strengths and drawbacks of such self-reporting methodologies?
6. What challenges do you think exist when trying to integrate musicians and music educators into healthcare services, such as hospitals or residential homes for older people? How could these challenges be overcome?

Analysis

7. Why is it important that Gilles includes people with mental health conditions in every step of his research projects, from defining the research questions to discussing the research outcomes, rather than treating them as study subjects?
8. Why do you think Dalcroze Eurythmics may not be a 'one-size fits-all' solution for using music to combat physical and mental health conditions?

Synthesis

9. What methods would you use to assess whether a Dalcroze Eurythmics class for elderly people is benefiting their well-being?

Evaluation

10. Why do you think that using sport to promote inclusivity has been more successful than using music? What methods do you think could be used to help music become just as symbolic for inclusivity?
11. How do you engage with music? For example, do you like to listen to music, play an instrument, sing or dance? How do you feel when you interact with music? How do you think these experiences benefit your physical and mental health?

Activity

In a group, design a short Dalcroze Eurythmics session for your class (look up examples online to discover what this involves). Think about how you will tailor your session to your class's particular needs, by taking factors such as availability of space, access to equipment and instruments, and the physical abilities of your classmates into account.

Design a questionnaire that will allow you to compare your classmates' well-being before and after they participate in your Dalcroze Eurythmics session so you can assess what impact it has on their physical and mental health.

Consider the following:

- What aspects of health and well-being (e.g., mood, heart and breathing rate, feelings of wakefulness and alertness, etc.) will you ask participants about?
- How will you analyse the answers you receive? How should you balance quantitative and qualitative answers?
- How will you ensure that participants' privacy is respected when collecting and analysing your data?

Collect pre-session questionnaire answers from all participants. Then, carry out your Dalcroze Eurythmics session, leading your class through the exercises. Collect post-session questionnaire answers from all participants. Compile the data you have collected and analyse your results. How did participating in your session impact your classmates' well-being?

Write a 1–2-page report summarising your study that includes:

- Any hypotheses based on previous research into the impacts of musical activities on well-being
- Your methodology, including what you did and how you analysed your results
- Your main findings (you could present your data in graphs)
- Any limitations of your study and how they might impact the validity of your results
- Suggestions for further research.

Gilles would love to learn what you discover during your study and to hear your thoughts on Q10. Send your report and ideas for improving music inclusivity to Music.Health@uottawa.ca

More resources

- This article from the American Psychiatric Association introduces a range of ways that music can benefit mental well-being: www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/power-of-music-in-mental-well-being
- This TEDx talk explores how music influences emotions and behaviours: www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPDKi-i618U
- This article explains the role of the Music and Health Research Institute: www.uottawa.ca/research-innovation/new-interdisciplinary-research-institute-explore-impact-music-health-and-well-being