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Focus on Innovation

Focus on Innovation is a monthly electronic newsletter designed to provoke thoughts and ideas on how to bring innovation to life within the organizations in which we work.

For Those on the Run

If you've ever wondered how music influences creativity, keep reading. Find out how music can be used, as "sonic caffeine" to activate, simulate and relax the mind and body.

Use "Sonic Caffeine" to Fuel Creativity

Research findings provide solid support for the claim that music used properly, increases creativity. An audio environment can be conducive to new ideas and cutting down mental blocks. For instance, major corporations such as Shell, IBM, and DuPont, along with hundreds of schools and universities use music, such as certain Baroque pieces, to cut learning time in half and increase retention of new materials. Filmmakers have been known to use music to create the mood for a movie in order to bring out the feelings of actors or actresses. Many design firms have recognized the importance of music in their working environment to directly influence design. All in all, music or background music can provide a positive thinking and learning environment.

Classical musician and author of *The Mozart Effect*, Don Campbell, condensed the world's research on all the beneficial effects of certain types of music to include:

- *Improves test scores*
- *Cuts learning time*
- *Calms hyperactive children and adults*
- *Reduces errors*
- *Improves creativity and clarity*
- *Heals the body faster*
- *Integrates both sides of the brain for more efficient learning*
- *Raises IQ scores 9 points (research done at University of California, Irvine)*

Campbell claims that music in the workplace can raise performance levels and productivity by reducing stress and tension, masking irritating sounds and contributing to a sense of privacy.

The key is to experiment with different musical styles to see what works best. Charles Thompson in his book "What a Great Idea!" recommends music that follows these guidelines:

- Avoid music with lyrics. Classical, light jazz, electronic and instrumental music of various forms can work well.
- Avoid music that demands your attention
- Avoid music with large, sudden changes in amplitude.
- Use music with sustained tones and subtle variations.

Using a variety of music can be beneficial since every time the music shifts from one style to another, your brain shifts wave patterns, making you think in a slightly different way. However, Campbell suggests that "just putting music on is not making optimal use of it; optimal use of music is learning to employ it when you need it for your creative process. Some working environments are so noisy that our bodies never relax." You need to allow for some downtime when no music is playing unless you are working in a loud environment and the music masks the other noise.

So what music do you play? Here are some recommendations of music that will achieve the best results in learning health and creativity:

- Music for the Mozart Effect*, Volumes I - IV, <http://www.mozarteffect.com>.
 - Volume I - Strengthen The Mind, Music for Intelligence & Learning (best used for studying).
 - Volume II - Heal The Body (best used for reducing stress, tension and accelerating healing);
 - Volume III - Unlock the Creative Spirit - Music for Creativity & Imagination (best used during times you want to accelerate your creativity).
 - Volume IV - Focus and Clarity - 2 CD's (best used to focus your mind for intensive study and large projects)
- Enhancing Creativity by Stephan Halpern, 1996, Steven Halpern's Inner Peace Music / IODA
- Brahms: Concerto in A Minor, Op 102
- Chopin: Piano Concerto No.1 in E Minor Op. 11
- Beethoven: Sonata No. 14 in C-Sharp Minor Op. 27
- Vivaldi: L'Estro Armonico, Op.2; Concerto No. 5 in A Major
- Original Motion Picture soundtrack from the movie Shine and/or The Piano
- Consider making your own recordings, in short segments, in the form of a "musical channel scan"

Listening to music can uplift your spirits and perhaps form some new neural pathways to help you in your creativity. Music has the power to make you feel good, providing a positive environment for thinking creatively and learning.

What's the Bottom line

The use of music as a creativity endorphin is like a "sonic caffeine" - Don Campbell.

This newsletter was adapted from the web article *Your Creative Life: Sonic Caffeine*, February 2000, HowDesign.com.



Please feel free to pass this newsletter on to others.
If you would like more information about the ideas and topics listed in this issue, contact Judy Laws, Ph.D. at jlaws@foursightconsulting.com.

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