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Emotional Intelligence: An Exercise Harnessing the Power of Music

Have you ever gotten into your car after a rough day at work, turned on your stereo system, and the perfect song for your mood came on? It seems to happen serendipitously at times, and, well, it feels powerful in the moment. Research has shown that music can evoke emotions and facilitate self-awareness in the listener.

Using music to express emotions is one mindfulness exercise you can use to increase your own emotional awareness. Emotional awareness has been identified as a skill that is imperative for emotional intelligence and can be the first step in taking control of your own emotional state. Below is a simple exercise you can do using music to tap into and develop a framework around your current emotional state. The key here is to be open minded and not to judge your thoughts or feelings as you listen to the music you choose.

Emotional Awareness Exercise

Reflection: In a quiet space, sit back and think about how you are feeling in the current moment. Don't worry about putting those feelings into words, just connect with how you perceive those emotions. Using that state of feeling, look at your song list on your computer or device where you have your music and pick out a few songs that resonate with the emotions you discovered with your quiet reflection.

Using this framework, listen to each song one at a time. Then, answer the questions below to become more self-aware of your current state so you can make sense of your feelings and emotions. Don't edit yourself.

What is the name of the song?

When listening to it, what is going through your mind?

How do you feel?

Are there any sections of the song that you resonate with more than others?

Any lyrics that feel like they are speaking to you?

What is this emotion trying to tell you?

Repeat this for a few more songs that you select. Gather the information and look at what you filled out. Is there a common theme? What emotions are you identifying and connecting with in the songs? Understanding your emotions makes it possible for you to manage them in a positive and constructive way. For example, if you feel sad during the day and you identify that, you can make an intentional effort to make yourself happier with self-care activities. Are you feeling stressed or angry? Bringing that to the forefront also allows you to investigate those feelings further. Identifying the reasons why you feel that way and talking to

others to work through those emotions can be extremely helpful. Strong emotions can cause you to make rash decisions about relationships, work, and other important parts of your life. Taking time to identify those emotions and move toward a better emotional state will allow you to move forward in a more constructive manner.

Using music for introspection is one way to improve emotional intelligence. There has been much research on types of music and genres and how different emotional states can be reached by varying musical rhythms and styles, but the most important thing is to find what works for you — Joan Jett, Taylor Swift, Kygo, the D.O.C., Metallica, or Bach.

“Music & rhythm find their way into the secret places of the soul.” — Plato

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Further Reading:

Cook, Terrance; Roy, R.K.; and Welker, Keith. Music as an emotional regulation strategy: An examination of genres of music and their roles in emotional regulation. [Psychology of Music, October 2017](#).

<https://positivepsychology.com/music-therapy-activities-tools/>