Do Musical Interventions Reduce Negative Mood?  
A Review of the Recent Literature

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**BACKGROUND**

Our review of the recent literature was undertaken to (a) confirm that current evidence supported the use of music interventions for the reduction of symptoms of mood disorders; (b) evaluate their effectiveness when used to improve negative mood states; (c) examine the characteristics of effective music interventions; and (d) suggest future directions for research examining music and mood.

**Depression and Anxiety are Categorized as Mood Disorders.**

- People diagnosed with depression experience "low mood, low energy, poor concentration, loss of pleasure, poor self-care, and low self-esteem" (Chen, Wong, & Thayala, 2010, p. 727).
- People diagnosed with anxiety experience irrational levels of worry, concern, and, in response to uncertainty about impending threats, changes in behavior and affect (Grube & Nitschke, 2013).
- People also experience 'garden-variety' negative moods in their lives. These moods may share characteristics with symptoms of mood disorders, but do so at levels that do not meet clinical criteria.

The fields of Clinical and Positive Psychology both pursue approaches that can be used to improve problematic moods including methods that employ music.

**Music Therapy and Other Music Interventions**

Music interventions, including music therapy, are employed to relieve negative moods in general populations, and mood disorder symptoms in clinical populations. Music interventions include a variety of techniques, which we classified as either passive, such as listening to music (i.e., Goodling, 2008), or active, such as performing, composing, or improvising music (i.e., Gold, Solli, Krüger, & Lie, 2009).

**METHODS**

We reviewed 45 articles published in peer reviewed journals between 2002 and 2014. Five were published between 2002 and 2007; 15 were published between 2008 and 2010; and the remaining 25 were published in or after 2011. Of these 45 articles, 23 (51%) were primary sources reporting music interventions.

Using NVivo, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) package, we coded the studies as follows:

1. **Population type:** samples were drawn from (A) clinical groups (combined data for depression and anxiety); (B) non clinical groups (no diagnosis); and (C) general populations (unidentified).
2. **Music intervention type:** we labeled (a) music listening as passive and (b) performing, composing, or improvising music as active interventions.

We synthesized the recent literature and here present what we learned about the relationships between music interventions and mood enhancement.

**REFERENCES**

(See handout)