

## One Meditation #12, December 2025 (December 24, 2025, 520 w.)

### One Meditation #12, Dec. 2025: "When Can Music Be Meditation?"

Welcome to this monthly meditation email and thanks for being here! Please consider sharing it with others. Subjects range from modern to ancient, Western to Eastern, and scientific to spiritual. To unsubscribe, email me. For more info, see below. – Richard

#### "WHEN CAN MUSIC BE MEDITATION?"

I played French horn and sang in two choirs in grades 6-8. But in high school, I joined a rock band: four Beatle-haired kids playing 1960s songs with three-part harmony. My most memorable night was a meditation moment. The dancers and our band suddenly felt like one, each controlling the other. I was stunned and enchanted.

#### Music a "Holy Place"

*The Mozart Effect: Tapping the Power of Music to Heal the Body, Strengthen the Mind, and Unlock the Creative Spirit* (2001) calls music "a holy place." Author Don Campbell states that music is "a cathedral so majestic that we can sense the magnificence of the universe [and also] a hovel so simple and private that none of us can plumb its deepest secrets."

It perhaps has been this way since the beginning of human community. Some anthropologists argue that the first human speech was singing. In recorded history, Jewish people in male and female groups danced and sang while playing instruments during celebrations such as the Wedding at Cana in the Christian New Testament. Native Americans long have chanted and danced to drumming at powwows. And ancient Hindu priests offered hymns to their mystic fire.

#### Music Helps Healing

The meditative magic of classical music, says Campbell in *The Mozart Effect*, can result in better learning, greater focus, improved psychological healing, and less difficult pain management. But a more recent study demonstrates, at least regarding healing and pain, that what may work best actually is the music you most prefer.

Bouman et al. describe in "The impact of different music genres on pain tolerance" (*Scientific Reports*, 2024) tests on about 500 subjects. The scientists discovered participants' "favored music genre...Uban, Electronic, Classical, Rock [or] Pop...has a significant positive influence on pain tolerance, irrespective of [the] genre."

#### Music as Meditation

Active engagement in music often is a form of meditation. First, singing, playing, and dancing cause deeper breathing. This shifts our autonomic nervous system. Scientists report deep breathing in meditation dissipates our "fight-or-flight" adrenaline, creates greater calm, and causes closer focus. A great example is how the 1960s Black Freedom Fighters used group meditative singing as they marched, to help them face their test of police dogs and beatings.

Engaging in music also often requires mindfulness. Your monkey mind does not easily wander. Playing, singing, or dancing needs attention.

Third, whether engaged or simply listening, your calmed nerves and turn toward mindfulness lead you, psychologically and physiologically, to more self-awareness. This draws you toward higher or deeper inner experiences.

Campbell's *Mozart Effect* still has excellent guidelines. However, it may apply to many musical genres and sounds. My preferred background music these days is nature's songbirds and moving water, but I also find singing in groups deeply moving, especially when it comes from my heart. And when a car goes by me blasting hardcore rap, I remember, now, that those inside it may be clearing their minds and banishing negativity.

In sum, if you sing, play an instrument, or dance, alone or in groups, you may be meditating. All you need is music that makes calmness and joy blossom within.

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### **Next Month: "The 'Gifts' of Meditating"**

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*Peace, Strength, Joy*

*Richard Jewell*

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*"Meditation has two major definitions: (1) science says it is a conscious calming of the body and mind, and (2) experienced practitioners often define it as aware attention for the purpose of inner growth. Using these two meanings, the word covers most major spiritual practices. Mindfulness, too, say the Mayo Clinic and other scientists, is a type of meditating. All of these outer forms and more are linked by having, in common, very similar purposes and scientific results." – "One Meditation #1," Jan. 2025*

*© 2025 by Richard Jewell. Please forward this to others who may find it useful. If you're not on the listserv, email me to be added; your email never is shared. Comments and questions also are welcome. Number of subscribers: about 460. I've practiced meditation and researched it since the mid-1960s and have earned graduate degrees in the field. I hope you enjoy being on the list!*

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*Previous issues starting Jan. 2025: <https://www.richardjewell.org/Meditation/default.htm>*

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