

MUSIC: ESSENTIAL TOOL IN EVERY DOULA'S GEARBAG

EMOTIONS AND MOTHERING

Could planning a daily “laugh break” be as beneficial as eating a healthy diet for expectant and new mothers? What if avoiding too much sensational TV was considered as important for a healthy pregnancy as avoiding alcohol and tobacco? How about if doctors prescribed daily meditation or music listening sessions (or both!) along with prenatal vitamins? Why not hand out a checklist of remedies for the *emotional* side effects of pregnancy at the same time as the one for the physical side effects?

I do not need to convince a doula that a mother's emotional health is of paramount importance to every aspect of her wellbeing, and her baby's, throughout all stages of pregnancy, birth and beyond! But I look forward to the day when every expectant and new mother is coached to consciously manage her emotional life as thoroughly and seriously as she is helped to manage physical factors with diet, exercise, proper rest and abstinence from harmful substances. I look forward to the day when women are as careful about the emotional impact of what they take in as they are about the physical aspects of becoming a mother.



Photo by David Castillo Dominici
FreeDigitalPhotos.com

MUSIC AS A TOOL FOR EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Many birth professionals already use music as a tool with their clients, especially for calming and relaxing purposes. Music is so powerful in so many ways on so many levels that I propose a radical new possibility:

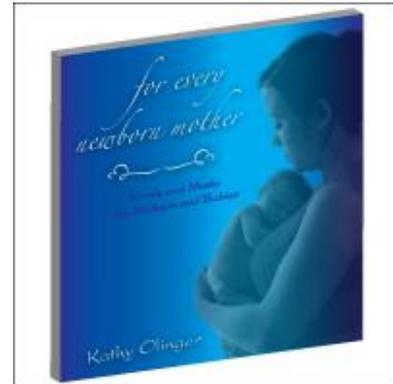
FROM “ME” TO “MOTHER”: MUSIC FOR FORGING THE MOTHERING IDENTITY

Music speaks to us so deeply that we identify with the music we love. Expectant and new mothers must transition in profound ways from their pre-pregnancy identity into that of the mother they're becoming. I propose that the music that they already identify with can be a powerful touchstone for them as they traverse the path. Also, this is the ideal time to discover new music that resonates with them—and to use it consciously as a bridge into their new identity.

For Every Newborn Mother, the music of the DONA International Conference 2013, was created with just that in mind. Musically, it evokes tender heartfelt emotions that

spark the mothering spirit within. And the voice-added tracks reinforce messages that the mother often gets nowhere else: you are valuable and important as a mother, you are ideal for mothering this baby, the mother-baby bond is strong between you and your child, all is progressing well... assurances that encourage and uplift, in a format that is more readily received and absorbed than the spoken word alone due to the subconscious effects of its musical dimension.

Already ideal for all the usual pregnancy-related uses of music, ***For Every Newborn Mother*** goes beyond the usual into the realm of (if you will) *spiritual doula*. Every mother who enjoys its melodies can amplify her innate abilities and enhance her efforts by utilizing its power.



SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE OF THE POWER OF MUSIC

MUSIC FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

The original mood management tool—that many already use unconsciously to manage emotions, music can:

- Revive and reenergize flagging spirits
- Relax and release tension and stress (both mother and baby)
- Divert and distract from negative feelings (such as anxiety), redirecting focus to more positive feelings
- Discharge unwanted emotions (such as anger and frustration)
- Fortify, encourage and inspire
- Calm, comfort and soothe (both mother and baby)

Listening to music causes the release of an array of “happy hormones”, including endorphins and oxytocin.

Regular music listening has been linked with a general overall increase of positive emotions.

MUSIC FOR MENTAL SUPPORT

Music enhances concentration and focus, and improves long-term memory.

Music enhances motivation.

Music enhances creativity and problem-solving.

MUSIC FOR PHYSICAL SUPPORT

Researchers are just beginning to discover all the physical benefits music confers:

- Improves heart rate
- Improves respiratory rate
- Improves blood pressure
- Improves brain wave frequencies
- Improves blood flow through vessels
- Increases Immunoglobulin A levels and natural killer cell counts
- Reduces cortisol levels
- Improves sleep
- Soothes pain

In a study with patients preparing to undergo surgery, music was more effective than drugs in reducing anxiety.

In a study at Utah Bally Regional Medical Center in Provo, Utah, premature babies given two 20-minute music listening sessions daily had slower heart rates and increased food and oxygen intake, as well as improved sleep, better sucking, and heightened moments of quiet awareness.

SOURCES

<https://www.mcgill.ca/newsroom/channels/news/major-health-benefits-music-uncovered-225589>

<http://www.imedicalapps.com/2013/04/beth-israel-study-nicu-babies-music-health-benefits/>>www.imedicalapps.com/2013/04/beth-israel-study-nicu-babies-music-health-benefits/

Cardillo, Joseph; DuRousseau, Don; Mindlin Galina (2012-01-01). Your Playlist Can Change Your Life: 10 Proven Ways Your Favorite Music Can Revolutionize Your Health, Memory, Organization, Alertness and More. Sourcebooks, Inc. Kindle Edition

Kent, Tami Lynn. Mothering From Your Center. Atria Books/Beyond Words; Original edition (February 19, 2013)