

It's simple. It just makes me feel good.

by Brad Johnson

Depending on the mood that I'm in, I listen to music for enjoyment, relaxation, for fun and for motivation. It really is a big part of my life.

Did you know there have been studies regarding the effect of music on the brain? One specific experiment performed by the University of California called, "The Mozart Effect," indicated that listening to classical music improved memory. In fact, immediately after listening to Mozart's Sonata for Two Pianos in D major, it is said that students taking tests improved their scores. It was such a big deal that other researchers wanted to see if the Mozart Effect existed in monkeys. They actually had monkeys listen to Mozart piano music for 15 minutes before a memory test was given. The researchers found that listening to Mozart did not improve the monkeys' performance compared to when the monkeys listened to rhythms or white noise. Maybe, if the monkeys knew who Mozart was, they would have been a little more motivated. Or, perhaps a banana dangled in front of them would have helped. I have a feeling it would have been a big commotion triggering the memory of hunger.

Seriously, after comparing children who had music lessons with children who didn't have such lessons, scientists from McMaster University in Canada, found that those who did take music lessons had different brain development. All the kids in the study were 4-6 years old, and the ones with the music lessons had better memories, as well as higher literacy and math levels. As recently as November 2005, Stanford University in California found for the first time that musical training improves how the brain processes the spoken word. The researchers say this could lead to improving the reading ability of children who have dyslexia and other reading problems.

Being a big fan of history and the belief that it teaches us many things, you can go back to find even more compelling information that really brings this theory home, because the influence of music can be clearly seen throughout the history of the world.

Did you know that music helped Thomas Jefferson write the Declaration of Independence? If he could not figure out the wording of a certain passage, he would play his violin. The music literally helped him get the words from his brain onto the paper.

And what people don't know about Einstein is that when he was young, he did so poorly in school, the teachers wanted him taken out. They said he was "too stupid to learn," and that it was a waste of time and energy on his education, and they even suggested that his parents help Albert find an easy, manual labor job.

Fortunately, his mother did not think her son was stupid. Instead Albert's parents bought him a violin. He became accomplished at the instrument, and it was the key that helped Albert Einstein become one of the smartest men who has ever lived. He himself acknowledged that the reason he was so smart was because of playing the violin. Mozart and Bach were his favorites. A close friend said that the way Einstein figured out his problems and equations was by improvising on the violin.

Napoleon summed it up by saying, "Give me control over he who shapes the music of a nation, and I care not who makes the laws." But, what do I say, even in the face of all these beneficial assertions about music?

It's simple. It just makes me feel good.

Brad Johnson is a freelance writer and National Promotions Manager for All Things Media. Brad may be reached at allthingsmedia@att.net.