Despite online finals season approaching, I've been finding it extremely hard to focus on my studies. This has given me a LOT of stress from the need to catch up, as well as the added anxieties from the present times. Through all of this, one thing has prevailed, and that is music.

As a music major, while I haven't been practicing every single day, I've (at the least) still been listening to music. Whether you're a consumer or producer, we can't deny this crucial aspect of our everyday lives.

Even if you hate it, if you ponder it, every sound is music. The birds outside, the rustling of the trees in the Michigan wind, the sounds of the city—even the ambulances and trains going by at four-in-the-morning.

It’s in the TV shows we watch, underneath those annoying YouTube advertisements, even your oven beeps a certain pitch when it’s ready to bake some sourdough bread. To put my thoughts into something tangible, I’ve been listening to music. While researching how music affects our brains, I’ve been listening to music. Music has been with humans since before any recorded history; many oral histories across civilizations were passed down through song. It’s as if we’re our own living experiments on how these perfectly curated air vibrations can change our lives.

And these effects are physical. When you put on that song you really like, it triggers neurons in your brain to release endorphins into your system. Just like exercising, it gives you that sense of alertness and euphoria. Similar to laughing, it can dilate your blood vessels, which in turn makes your heart stronger.

In addition to all of that, listening to music has been proven to lower blood pressure and boost your immune system. These health effects are almost critical to maintaining stability in the present moment, especially when trying to study. With being stuck inside all day during quarantine, these stimuli are essential to maintaining the same physical reactions to our environments we would otherwise experience.

As we go through these very turbulent times filled with anxiety, don’t forget to acknowledge that the option to listen to and enjoy music exists. And if you possess the ability to make music, doing so will assist you in finding peace. If you don’t possess the ability, but want to, doing so will also help you find peace and a sense of fulfillment in your daily life. If you feel lost, think of a song that really brings you joy and blast it on repeat. It can save your life.

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