

THE SECRET LANGUAGE OF THE HEART, How to Use Music, Sound, and
Vibration as Tools for HEALING and PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION
A Book Review and Commentary by David G. Schwartz, M.D.

Music and sound have powerful effects to improve and maintain good health, and together comprise a most underestimated beneficial tool. Many articles and sources document the salutary effects of music on health. This book makes a thorough overview of the whole area of subtle energy and vibrations from music and sound and how they can heal our emotional, mental, and physical states, and how that can enhance spiritual awareness and support spiritual growth.

Barry Goldstein, himself a Grammy award-winning composer and musician, loved music from early childhood, and as an adult, discovered he could make music his career. So he fully embraced music whole-heartedly, finding that composing, playing, and listening to music enriched his mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual life and opened up his creativity to explore newer and greater experiences and adventures. He describes how we too can utilize these tools and methods for better health and quality of life.

He explains how to use breathing, music, and sound to affect the heartbeat and the brain waves in a beneficial way. He discusses exercises called the heart Song Breathing Process that works with the rhythm and music within the heartbeat, the breath, and the sigh, directing visualization, concentration, and attitude, to discover on a feeling level what he calls the unique "heart code" each individual has. This awareness of our internal music then opens up our utilization of the music and sound from external sources. This also opens up awareness of intuition, guidance, and love coming from the emotional heart. This cultivates the heart's intelligence. The author speaks of the physical heart and the heart as the seat of the emotions interchangeably and freely. I have observed from other sources the correlation between the emotional heart and the physical heart. A major part of Dr. Dean Ornish's program for reversing coronary artery blockages was an increased emotional awareness and expression and love in the group sharing sessions called the "opening the heart" process. Many people with coronary disease are emotionally isolated and often hiding an inner anger. I think that opening of the emotional heart may be the most important part of the program to open the arteries, more than the diet, exercise, etc. Now I can see that music can be a great opening for that kind of healing.

It is then possible to improve coherence, rhythm, and harmony among the various organ systems in the body as well as harmony of mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects. As an orchestra has to have harmony among the various instruments, so the heart, nervous system, and digestive system, all need to be in harmony to function healthfully.

Our emotions, thoughts, and attitudes can create harmony or disharmony. Gratitude, kindness, compassion, and joy can result in smooth, orderly, synchronized rhythms (coherence). Anger and frustration can produce non-orderly and fragmented rhythms. The right music at the right time can promote positive emotions. These positive emotions

have been shown to increase heart rate variability. American Journal of Cardiology 76,# 14, 15 (Nov. 1955) 1089-93. The greater the heart rate variability (HRV), the better the heart and other systems can handle stress. It is an indicator of how adaptable the flexible the autonomic nervous system is. If the heartbeat has no variability it means these systems are operating at maximum capacity to handle the stresses and can't take any variation.

The Institute of HeartMath says, "Heart coherence, marked by smooth and balanced heart rhythms, is the optimal state for your heart, mind, and emotions and all of the processes in your body, including cognitive, hormonal, digestive, respiratory, and immune systems."

The heart can adapt and synchronize to the tempo of a piece of music. This is called entrainment. When the beat of the music is around 60 beats per minute (bpm), a common tempo for classical music, the heart can entrain to that rate and can be at its most relaxed state. Music played to pregnant women can entrain the heart rate of the fetuses. Music played for an unconscious patient resulted in the heartbeat entraining with the beat of the music. Relaxing music can support the body to move into the state of repair, detoxification, and rejuvenation, and it can handle stresses more easily.

Specific types of music can have specific affects on the heart. "Classical and meditation music benefit cardiovascular health the most, with heavy metal and techno having the least benefit." Mozart lowered blood pressure (BP), while rock music made BP go up. Journal of Clinical Hypertension 14, Supplement (may 2012): 1-10.

The music's results can be affected by the composer's and musician's attitude and intention, just as Grandma's casserole recipe may have a different flavor when someone else cooks it, if it doesn't have the love and energy that Grandma put into it. The emotions that come through the music create a shared field of energy with the listeners much as the Super Bowl creates a shared field of excitement, or just as when you walk into a room and can sense the mood before anyone says anything.

The author himself pays attention to creating in his being a positive mood before composing a piece of music. Then he senses a shift in which he feels the warmth in his heart, and that he is not the composer, but that he is being guided by a higher power. He designed music called "The Heart Codes," with the specific intention of heart coherence and entrainment. Part of the intention is that when we listen to that music and expand our mood and awareness, we also affect others around us, and it ripples out to the larger world.

Music also engages the brain. The Institute of HeartMath again: "The heart and brain maintain a continuous two-way dialogue, each influencing the other's functioning. The signals the heart sends to the brain can influence perception, emotional processing, and higher cognitive functions. This system and circuitry are viewed by neurocardiology researchers as a "heart brain."

In a study at the University of Newcastle in Australia, popular music helped patients with severe brain injuries to recall memories previously inaccessible. Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to repair connections and find alternative pathways to memories, emotions, and speech. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords made a remarkable recovery from a gunshot wound affecting her language center. With music therapy, melodic intonation, and singing, she was able to create a re-organization, with connections necessary to relearn language. Stanford University School of medicine did brain imaging of people listening to short symphonies and found that peak brain activity occurred during the short silence between movements. The author theorizes that it is in the silences that the busy brain communicates and integrates with the heart.

He encourages playing an instrument and improvising, singing, chanting, and drumming, to engage the brain in creativity, relaxation, and peacefulness. Music can entrain the brain to more relaxed states. Certain types of music induce alpha and theta waves associated with relaxation and creativity. For insomnia, some types of music can entrain the brain to produce delta waves, associated with sleep.

Songs that resonate with us can bring awareness of hidden emotions and blockages, and challenges us to aspire to do and be in new ways and find purposes lying dormant. In 2004, when the author was at a conference, Dr. Wayne Dyer spoke these words that seemed to be aimed directly at him, "Don't die with your music still in you." Up to that time, Barry had doubted that he could make music his career instead of just a hobby. That was the moment when he committed to write, sing, and produce his first solo album.

I met Barry recently when he lectured at the American Functional Medicine Association seminar, and I bought this book there. He made an elegant presentation, and the other speakers were tending to address him as "Dr. Goldstein," since the other speakers were doctors lecturing to doctors. He presented as a warm, gentle easy going person, reflecting how his music has molded him into an emotionally and spiritually aware person, in tune with his heart and inner self, in contrast to some musicians who get caught up in an intense schedule of performances and resort to alcohol, cigarettes, and cocaine to keep them going and to put them to sleep. This author lives what he is talking about, lives a healthful lifestyle, and speaks from a warm and aware heart. He encourages us to use music as a tool for awakening hidden energies and aspirations for transformation.

Barry encourages us to create play-lists for different times of the day and for different moods and situations we may experience. "Be the D.J. of your life." Choose volume, tempo, rhythm, melody, lyrics, frequencies, chords, and modes to suit your purpose, and above all, music that you like. Choose a target emotional state and select appropriate songs, etc., for shifting your emotions and consciousness.

He devotes a chapter to the seven energy centers in the body, gives methods of checking which ones are blocked, and methods for tuning the centers with intention, songs, and tuning forks. He gives specific songs for each energy center.

I would comment that the energy flow in the body may sound like voodoo to some people, but smart phones and robotics may also have seemed like voodoo a century ago. The energy channels and centers have been well known in Traditional Chinese Medicine as "Chi," and in the Ayurvedic Medicine (from India), as "prana," for thousands of years, and they are the very basis for acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine. When energy is blocked, most often by poor health habits, lack of sleep or exercise, etc., and negative feelings (especially when unexamined or suppressed), the stagnation of energy can be the precursor to poor emotional and physical health and organ and tissue imbalance and damage. Energy is indeed worthy of our attention, and music can be a great gift that helps restore our health by this method. Words from old languages that have been used for thousands of years, such as Greek, Hebrew, and Sanskrit also carry a special vibration, and these have been used for chants and songs. Some words have that humming sound that creates a special effect, like shalom, om, amen, ameen, salim, salaam, etc.

The author makes suggestions of specific songs, chants, and instrumental music for various circumstances. For those accustomed to streaming and downloading on portable players, this may be easy to do, but for some of us less digitally connected, it may take some time to find and access the recommended pieces of music. I do plan to eventually collect more of them and to make them available for appropriate times. He said in his lecture that for best quality sound, get the CD and download onto the play-list in your player, because when you get digital recordings, the sounds are compressed. He also said that even if you are not listening to a song or singing it aloud, even if you hear it in your mind, it would still be beneficial. For some who have a large play list of tunes in their brains, this is very convenient, in all circumstances, to just think of a song and silently listen to it in the mind.

He details research on a variety of health challenges where music improved symptoms and reduced toxic stress. In Alzheimer's patients, it increased positive behaviors and reduced aggression and anxiety. In his lecture he showed a video about Henry, who was demented, withdrawn, and non-communicative. When they played one of his favorite artist's music, he began to bob and sway, smile, and become alive. After the music stopped, it seemed he could not stop talking about how great the musician was and how he used to play his music a lot.

Children with autism could more easily communicate their emotions with the use of music. The American Cancer Society states that music therapy improves anxiety, pain, mood, quality of life, heart rate, respiratory rate, and blood pressure in cancer patients. Music reduces nausea and vomiting with chemotherapy. Oncology Nursing Forum 25 #9 (October 1998): 1551-6. Music has benefit for cardiovascular health Heart 96 #23 (December 2010): 1868-71. Music reduced pain and anxiety in children undergoing medical and dental procedures Journal of Evidence-Based Dental Practice 9 #4 (December 2009): 213-4. A randomized controlled trial showed cost-effectiveness of community singing on mental health quality of life in older people with depression. British journal of Psychiatry 207 #3 (September 2015): 250-5. Music reduces pain and increases functional mobility in fibromyalgia. Frontiers in Psychology 5 #9 (February 11,

2014). Choral singing, voice exercise, and rhythmic and free body movements showed improvement in motor activity and emotional states in Parkinson's Disease. Psychosomatic Medicine 62 # 3 (May-June 2000): 386-93. In pregnancy, fetuses respond to music through changes in activity and heart rate. Kisilevski, et al, "Maturation of Fetal Response to Music."

I remember reading in Norman Cousins's book, Anatomy of An Illness about the famous musician Pablo Cassals who in later years had severely limited mobility from arthritis. He was invited to play his favorite piece on the piano. Bent over, he took small steps and could barely get to the piano. At first, his gnarled fingers slowly picked out one note at a time. Then he gradually increased the tempo and his body became alive as he vigorously pounded out the notes and chords in lively animated fashion. A total transformation of his body, posture, and mood occurred as he experienced the joy of the music, and one would not think he had arthritis. Afterward, he cavorted and flirted with the young women and walked like a much younger man.

The PBS News Hour recently (Jan 12, 2017), featured classical pianist Jeanne Stark. "I am 90 years old. I don't know why I am here. I should be dead, because most people are." She played the piano as lively as any younger person. I suspect it was her love of music that kept her in good health that long. Describing when she was an infant, she stated, "Music entered my life before I knew it. My father, he walked around with me and sang, and then I stopped crying, and I smiled. He made up his mind, hmm, see, this is a musician."

I think that anything that has a positive effect on mood, awareness, creativity, emotional expression, energy flow, and attitude is likely to have some benefit in all health challenges and can do a lot to prevent or reduce the risk of much chronic illness, including cardiovascular disease, cancer, autoimmune conditions, digestive and immune deficiency, and dementia. Music can do just that.

Here are some quotes from the chapter headings and from his lecture:

Albert Einstein said, "If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician." He would sit at the piano and come up with great ideas.

Pablo Cassals – "Music is the divine way to tell beautiful, poetic things to the heart."

Ray Charles – "I was born with music inside me...Music was one of my parts. Like my ribs, my liver, my kidneys, my heart. Like my blood. It was a force already within me when I arrived on the scene. It was a necessity for me – like food or water."

Plato – "Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, imparting grace, and making the soul of him who is rightly educated graceful."

Lao Tzu – "Music in the soul can be heard by the universe."

Ralph Waldo Emerson – "Music...takes us out of the actual and whispers to us dim secrets that startle our wonder as to who we are and for what, whence and where to.

Cervantes – "He who sings scares away his woes."

Sir Thomas Beecham, English conductor – "The function of music is to release us from the tyranny of conscious thought."

Leo Tolstoy – "Music is the shorthand of emotion."

Yoko Ono – "To me, the concept of distance is not important. Distance doesn't exist, in fact, and neither does time. Vibrations from love or music can be felt everywhere, at all times."