

Benefits of Drumming

- Michael Clark, Drumatic Innovation

There's more to [drumming](#) than you know!

Drumming has [physiological effects](#).

It increases heart rate and blood flow just like an aerobic exercise.

The process of drumming engages both the linear, (the rational left) and the creative, (the intuitive right) sides of the [brain](#).

The two brain hemispheres emanate different wave frequencies.

It also synchronizes the frontal and lower areas of the brain.

It integrates the non-verbal information from the lower brain structures into the frontal cortex and produces a feeling of insight, understanding, integration, certainty, conviction, and truth.

Consequently, drumming is like a deep [meditation](#).

It brings you into synchronization, which is a state of consciousness.

“Drumming directly links humans with the vibration of the Earth by slowing the brain waves to around 8 cycles per second, the same frequency as the planet” (Feathers, 1995).

Drumming heals the human energy field, so if your intention is for some [healing](#) while you drum, it will.

Improved IQ scores can now be added to the list of benefits from playing drums.

A recent study shows that playing drums improves IQ scores of [children](#).

Previous studies showed that musical training improves a child's literacy and math skills but this study has shown that one's [intelligence level](#) can be improved by drumming.

“Playing the drums makes the brain think in a way that very few activities can.

Being able to understand musical notes and dissect how rhythms work and go together is a very complicated thought process” (Study Shows Percussion Improves IQ Scores of Children, 2006).

The study shows that if one is always exposed to this kind of brain activity, it improves their IQ level.

According to a study by Dr. E. Glenn Shellenberg at the University of Toronto, IQ test scores of 6 year old children significantly improved after receiving drum lessons.

Shellenberg recruited a group of 144 six (6) year olds and separated them into 4 groups: those receiving [drum lessons](#), voice lessons, drama lessons and no lessons.

Children receiving the drum lessons showed significant improvement in their IQ tests, gaining an average of 7 IQ points.

Meanwhile, children receiving voice lessons increased 6 points, those receiving drama lessons increased 5 points and children receiving no lessons improved 4 points.

In his article in Psychological Science, Shellenberg concluded that musical training, in particular, was responsible for the extra IQ points.

“The findings indicate that music lessons cause small increases in IQ but comparable non-musical activities do not have similar consequences” (Shellenberg, 2003).

Drumming is one of the fastest growing segments within the musical instrument industry.

The various benefits of drumming and percussion are increasing in visibility and validity.

Other benefits of playing the drums are improved musical coordination and brain activity; physical therapy, and stress relief; improved social skills such as team work, self esteem and discipline and improved abstract thought processes.

Drumming is also gaining recognition among researchers and scientists as a therapeutic tool.

Neurologist Barry Bittman of the Mind-Body Wellness Center in Meadville, Pennsylvania led a study on the benefits of drumming.

The study found that patients, who took part in group drumming, or [drum circles](#), experienced increased levels of disease fighting immune system cells, also known as natural killer cells.

Bittman tested the blood chemistry of 111 healthy people in a series of experiments.

He notes participants in all groups experienced a drop in cortisol, an indicator of stress but only the group of active drummers had a significant increase in natural killer cells.

Bittman says this difference is due to the stress reducing benefits of self-expression, camaraderie and rhythmic drumming.

Sound waves have a positive effect on body's cells.

As an example, ultrasounds can help the immune system produce more of these disease fighting cells.

Therefore, drumming can boost the [immune system](#).

Drum therapy has been around for eons and practiced by the likes of the Shamans of Mongolia to the Minianka healers of [West Africa](#) to maintain physical, mental, and spiritual health.

Research now verifies these therapeutic effects of ancient rhythm techniques.

There have been other studies that have showed how drumming calms, focuses, and heals Alzheimer's patients, autistic children, [emotionally disturbed teens](#), recovering addicts, trauma patients, and prison and homeless populations.

It goes to show that drumming is a valuable tool for the treatment of stress, fatigue, anxiety, and hypertension, asthma, chronic pain, arthritis, lowers blood pressure, mental illness, migraines, cancer, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, stroke, paralysis, emotional disorders, and a wide range of physical disabilities.

According to music educator and leader consultant Ed Mikenas, "Drumming provides an authentic experience of [unity](#) and physiological synchronicity.

If we put people together who are out of sync with themselves (i.e., diseased, addicted) and help them experience the phenomenon of entrainment, it is possible for them to feel with and through others what it is like to be synchronous in a state of preverbal connectedness" (Mikenas, 2004).