

# Music Therapy and Sports

On its face, music therapy and something as active as sports would seem like two things that would have almost nothing to do with each other – but wouldn't you know – they do! While both are different in how they stimulate brain activity – they're both intensely effective when it comes to improving overall athletic performance. Recent advances in the field of neurology has proven that coordination, spatial calculation and response speed can be enhanced when auditory processing is improved.

The Cerebellum – the part of the brain that is involved in these functions – integrates a wide range of automatic functions in your body. Sound therapy can single-handedly assist with athletic performance – especially those athletes who deal with chronic pain or nagging injuries. Not only that, but it can maximize an athlete's preexisting capabilities, making them sharper and more alert on the field of play.

One of the most pronounced ways music therapy helps is through improved flexibility. If you look at the main causes of chronically injured baseball players today (for example) – you'll frequently see things like mild calf strains, forearm tightness and back stiffness pop up on Disabled List reports. Music can help to calm those muscles that deal with the day-to-day grind of a longer 162 game season and make it easier to move, stretch and prepare one's body for games.

Another significant improvement is with regards to deeper, more refreshing sleep. One of the more interesting player studies in recent years was done on Jason Varitek, one time catcher for the Boston Red Sox. As catchers are susceptible to regression at an earlier age than other position players, their ability at the plate can decline in a wide variety of ways. Varitek's decline manifested itself in steep day/night splits, meaning that he hit well at night, but struggled during the day. It was discovered that Varitek's poor sleep habits were the primary culprit – as he was discovered to be a notoriously poor sleeper, staying up late and often waking up during the night. With improved sleep, he was able to function more alertly earlier in the day and while physical skill limited the extent of his bounce back, he did see a noticeable improvement in his daytime performance.

Where does music therapy come into play? Simply put- it helps you get deeper, more satisfying sleep. The better you sleep, the higher your energy levels for the next day.

Last and certainly not least, is enhanced processing speed. Especially in advanced levels of athletic endeavors, reaction time and the ability to react to ongoing conditions is one of the most valuable skills an athlete can possess. From how Peyton Manning reads a defense to how Roger Federer returns a 120 mph serve, being able to be more alert and react more efficiently and faster to situations can often make the difference between a star and just another player. Music Therapy greatly enhances one's ability to process information and react to situations as they unfold. So whether you're a pro looking to add that all so crucial small edge or someone who plays in a men's hockey league and just wants to go to work without the pain from the grind of last night's game, then you should give Music Therapy a try. It'll improve your performance both on and off the field.