Have You Heard of Music Therapy for Migraine?

by JAIME SANDERS

Migraine Relief Music

One of the tools I use in managing my migraine disease is mindfulness. Meditation has been an integral part of my healing for the past several years. Living with chronic intractable migraine means that pain is an everyday thing for me. With limits on how often pain medication can be taken to avoid medication adaptation headache, I must use other techniques to cope with the pain.

My first encounter with mindfulness was during a pain management class I took almost 10 years ago. We were taught how to breathe, use acupressure and practiced meditations. The instant decrease in pain from meditating was an eye-opener for me. I came away from that class with a new set of valuable tools to add to my migraine toolkit. But, how does mindfulness help in the management of migraine?

Mindfulness

Mindfulness-based interventions or MBI have promise as a non-pharmacological therapy for migraine, mainly by improving adaptive concentration capability through visual, cognitive and emotional environments. Complementary and alternative options for the treatment and management of migraine has significantly increased due to their high cost-effectiveness and lower side effect profiles.

The goal of meditation is to improve a person's ability to regulate emotions and psychological capacities, focusing mainly on attention-control, emotional regulation and self-awareness. There are several meditative techniques that are used, including transcendental meditation, mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT).

Transcendental Meditation

Transcendental meditation transcends us to an effortless state in which the object of consciousness is absent. While TM is not a mantra-based meditation in the sense that its main center and focus is directed towards transcendence, it includes the use of mantras.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

MBSR focuses on sensitivity or knowledge training that focuses on the present moment. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is a therapeutic technique that blends meditation with yoga. Through increasing mindfulness, participants seek to reduce their general anxiety and emotional reactivity and to achieve a greater sense of calm.

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) incorporates cognitive behavioral approaches and mindfulness

methods to help people properly understand and control their feelings and behaviors in order to gain relief from anxiety. While originally designed to tackle chronic depression, MBCT may be useful to individuals receiving care for a wide variety of mental health conditions.

Best Meditation Apps

You can access thousands of guided meditations from several different apps available to download onto your smart device. Prices range from no cost to a monthly or yearly subscription being required to access the content offered. Here are some of this year's best meditation apps:

- Calm - $70/annually with a 7-day free trial
- Headspace - $13/month with a 7-day free trial OR $70/annually with a 2-week free trial
- Smiling Mind – Free
- Insight Timer – Free
- Stop, Think & Breathe – Offers several activities for free. Premium membership runs $10/month or $59/annually
- Simple Habit - $12/month or $90/annually
- Saatva - $108 for lifetime use

Music and Audio Therapy

Music therapy for the treatment of migraine may be an option for some if phonophobia, or sensitivity to sound, is not a problem. While during a severe attack, external sounds and noises can exacerbate the pain, therefore rendering music or audio therapy ineffective even if they consist of tranquil sounds you may otherwise find calming. Also, the use of headphones can cause more pain by adding unwanted pressure. However, during a moderate to mild attack, listening to migraine relief music (soothing audio through a speaker) may help you relax and in turn, reduce pain.

Relaxing Music

Migraine relief music can be whatever genre of music that brings calm, peace and tranquility to you. Slow melodic music such as ballads, smooth jazz and classical music are good options to listen to. Artists like Enya and Sade have super soothing tracks. If island vibes are what you are seeking, try a little Bob Marley.

Binaural Beat Technology (BBT)

The two tones of the binaural beats are identical but different frequencies. Each sound is played into a separate ear, and when the two frequencies are perceived by the brain it produces a third note, called a binary beat. BBT can be used to facilitate conditions of intense relaxation.

Try Binaural Beats & Deep Breathing for Chronic Pain Relief on YouTube or check out this playlist on Spotify.

White and Pink Noise

White noise is an ongoing track or loop of sounds like rain, crashing waves and jungle noises. White noise machines and apps have been used to help people fall and stay asleep. Due to the relaxing nature of these sounds, white noise may be helpful to lull and calm a migraine attack and promote better sleep hygiene.

Give some rain in a forest a try to see if it's your cup of tea.

If white noise is not for you, pink noise is an alternative that can improve sleep and memory. What is the white to pink difference? Both cover all of the frequencies that the human ear can detect, but as volume increases, the intensity of pink noise decreases. Although white noise can sound static or hiss, pink noise is quieter and more soothing at all frequencies.

Try a combination of binaural beats and pink noise with this pain relief YouTube video.