



Drum Your Stress Away

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Anyone who has experienced meditation understands the power that focused attention has to calm the mind and bring about deep states of relaxation. Rhythmic drumming has filled this function in human societies for millennia. In this article I'll talk about the benefits of drumming for stress relief and give you some ideas about how you can start to experience this wonderful stress buster.

Besides the fact that it's just plain fun, drumming provides many physiological and psychological benefits. Drumming has been shown to reduce levels of the stress hormone Cortisol. The repetitive physical movements involved in drumming facilitate the release of physical and emotional tension. In fact boisterous drumming even has aerobic benefits providing healthy exercise for your heart and lungs. Rhythmic drumming has been shown to lower blood pressure. It will focus the mind and can aid in memory and other cognitive functions. Regular drumming practice will help improve motor coordination and immune response. Over time drumming will start to change your response to stress so, if you feel like you just want to hit something, bang your drum.

By far the most popular drum used in group drumming is the African djembe. The djembe is a hand drum and can be found in many different sizes, colours and materials. The best way to experience the energy and advantages of drumming is by attending a drum circle. Drum circles are loosely organized groups brought together by a facilitator. Drummers of all levels are welcome. Drums are often available for rent. Sit across from an experienced drummer so that you can watch. Then just let go and have fun. Even the sensation of your drum skin vibrating carries many benefits.

For those of you who aren't feeling quite brave enough to attend a drum circle yet, you can make a simple drum from an empty laundry detergent or bleach bottle. Rise the bottle out well, throw out the cap and you have an instant, very inexpensive drum. Hold the bottle by the handle and bang it gently on the ground or a table. You may be surprised at the lovely sound it can make. Start to drum in a simple heart-beat rhythm; dum-dum, pause, dum-dum. Keep your pace slow and if you can, synchronize your drumming to your own heart beat. Just relax and let your body move the drum slowly as you breathe deeply and experience a sense of deep peace and calm.

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Once you give this compelling stress-buster a try you'll find it hard to resist the rhythm bug. Drumming can be a very social activity and can help combat feelings of loneliness and isolation. Attend a drum festival like the World Rhythm Festival in Seattle, Washington. I'm certain you'll find the event both exhilarating and inspiring.

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