

Music and it's many uses

By Joanne West

Having gone through a traumatic and abusive relationship for nearly four years which left me broken, shattered inside and a shell of what I once was (which was happy, bubbly but a little nieve) I stumbled across a band called Linkin Park. At the time I was working for a radio station selling advertising space on air so was always out and about in my car.

Certain behaviours that my ex-partner had worried me but because he was good at what he did, the blame in my head fell solely on myself. I was down, depressed, I felt utterly insane and crazy. I felt like I was a horrid person and no matter what I did it was wrong and selfish.

I now know what he was doing was gaslighting me and I now know it was indeed him who had NPD which is short for Narcissistic Personality Disorder.

When I came across one of Linkin parks songs, as he sang the words, they started to resonate with me. I would often delay going up to his house even though I was deeply head over heels in love with his so I could drive up the mountains and listen to their music.

The first song that struck a chord with me was "Numb" (lyrics below)

*"I'm tired of being what you want me to be
Feeling so faithless, lost under the surface
Don't know what you're expecting of me
Put under the pressure of walking in your shoes"*

*"I've become so numb, I can't feel you there
Become so tired, so much more aware
I'm becoming this, all I want to do
Is be more like me and be less like you*

*Can't you see that you're smothering me?
Holding too tightly, afraid to lose control
'Cause everything that you thought I would be
Has fallen apart right in front of you"*

*"And I know I may end up failing too
But I know you were just like me with someone disappointed in you"*

When you delve further into the lyrics the song is actually about a girl who feels smothered by her mother. She wants to be an artist and she isn't supported in that decision. She is humiliated by her teacher for dreaming and her school "friends" laugh at her and push her to the ground.

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXYiU_JCYtU)

When I listened to this song I felt complete emotional commitment to the song. It was exactly what I was feeling. I felt I was smothered to be a certain person, to act a certain way and if I didn't there would be repercussions; mainly in the form of mental abuse but if I tried to argue back I was quite often met with the abuser placing his hands around my neck and squeezing tightly to the point where eventually I thought one day he would kill me.

When you are not allowed to be the person you naturally are I think that creates a high level of anxiety and the feeling of walking on eggshells. I think that is detrimental to your mental health! A love relationship should be healthy and you should be at one with one another.

According to joinonlove.org which isn't an academic source, there are 5 main elements in a healthy relationship

- 1) It should move at a comfortable pace (I was love bombed at a very early stage)
- 2) You should be able to trust one another (he didn't trust me at all and made me very concerned and anxious about what he was doing)
- 3) Honesty (I was always very honest with him but that would make him angry. I now don't believe anything he told me)
- 4) Independence (he wanted full independence and would refuse to see me through the weekdays, only weekends but I would do anything at that time to hang on to him)
- 5) Respect (he never respected me although made out quite often that he did)

Spotting a Narcissist is "not as easy as you think" (hms.harvard.edu/news/can-you-spot-a-narcissist-its-not-as-easy-as-you-think-study-finds) and a lot of people find themselves falling in love extremely quickly due to the way they love bomb you in the beginning. I could go into more detail about this but for the purposes of this paper, I am going to continue to go more into details about the influence of music and it's effects on mental and physical wellbeing.

After I split with my abuser I went to a place called women's aid and they handed me a booklet explaining what is normal and what isn't normal behaviour from your partner. Some of it was really eye-opening and made me realise a lot of mind games that had been going on were, in fact, him and NOT my doing as he had me believing for that last four years. In that booklet were a poem and the lyrics to Eminem & Rihanna's "I love the way you lie". I listened to that song over and over, watched the video over and over and to this day still have feelings of pain, fear and sometimes anger when I hear it. Music, unlike a storybook or a TV programme, can take you right back to a place or a situation in your mind and can stir up feelings and memories like nothing else I have ever known. I mean, we all remember where we were when Phil Mitchell got shot but that was because they made it into a big campaign, try remembering where you were when Phil punched Tina for the first time.

I believe that no matter what your situation, music can help. There have been countless studies done in relation to music therapy. One such study was done on 60 people admitted to hospital for a major stroke, all were given standard hospital care, 30 were given music to listen to, 30 were given audiobooks to listen to and 30 were left with just the standard care, nothing else. Of those groups, the 30 people listening to audiobooks had their verbal memory improved by 20-30%, the group listening to music improved by 60% and the group left to standard care with no extra stimulation also sat at around 20-30%. [Hms.harvard.edu. 2015. \[online\] Available at: <https://hms.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/assets/Sites/Longwood_Seminars/Longwood%20Seminar%20Music%20Reading%20Pack.pdf> \[Accessed 2 January 2021\].](https://hms.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/assets/Sites/Longwood_Seminars/Longwood%20Seminar%20Music%20Reading%20Pack.pdf)
706 words

I started this essay explaining how the lyrics to this song were intended as one thing but were perceived by me as something else. Imagine that Linkin Park hadn't done that particular music or they hadn't even written and produced it. Imagine it was a different band, would I have felt the same connection with it? I think I wouldn't have connected with it, much like I believe that there are many songs out there that I could connect with but don't because the music doesn't vibe with me.

Going back to the last paper I cited, they had the idea that all humans are rhythmic by nature, our brains and nervous systems are linked up in such a way that we respond to rhythms and repetitions.

Much like our personalities, everyone's music taste is different but everyone responds to it in one way or another. Step back in time and the ancient Greeks used music to handle stress, promote sleep and soothe pain whilst the Chinese used it for healing. In Western medicine, we did use music but slowly phased it out to make way for scientific healing. Music healing has now been studied in-depth and is slowly making its way back as a credible healing tool. [Hms.harvard.edu. 2020. \[online\] Available at: <https://hms.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/assets/Sites/Longwood_Seminars/Longwood%20Seminar%20Music%20Reading%20Pack.pdf> \[Accessed 30 December 2020\].](https://hms.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/assets/Sites/Longwood_Seminars/Longwood%20Seminar%20Music%20Reading%20Pack.pdf)

The way I use music to heal is on an emotional level. As I have previously stated I had a deep connection to a band who use music as a way to express pain. I think that is why I connected so well because at the time I was living in pain every day. During my essay, I have explained how music can be used to help with stress, sleep and recovery but what about the emotional recovery of a heart? Whatever your musical influence or tastes, there is no denying that listening to music to evoke negative emotions is something that we have all done at some point. Whilst there is no single explanation as to why humans do it, a survey was done on 59 people and an overwhelming majority gained enjoyment from it. (Garrido, S. and Schubert, E., 2020. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/MP.2011.28.3.279?Seq=1>. [online] JSTOR. Available at: <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/MP.2011.28.3.279?seq=1>> [Accessed 30 December 2020].)

Music can mean so many different things to so many different people. It can mean (like in my case) helping someone cope with domestic abuse by helping them see more clearly or it could just be somewhere they can take their mind for a while to escape the torment they are trying to deal with. As proved, the song lyrics don't actually have to come across the way they were intended by the songwriter for real connections with songs to be formed. Music can be a healer; a healer of the mind, a healer of the heart, a healer of the body; music literally can help heal a broken heart both physically and emotionally. Music can take you straight back to a place you want to be or it can take you to a place you do not want to be, it doesn't give you the luxury of choice. You are either forced back there or you happily drift there in your mind, all smiles or all frowns. Lastly, let's not forget the 'just because' there doesn't have to be a reason for us to listen to music, sometimes, we can purely listen to it for enjoyment.

When they say music is the answer, I tend to agree. No matter what the questions, music *is* the answer.