"Take a sad song and make it better"

The healing effect of music

"Did I listen to pop music because I was miserable, or was I miserable because I listened to pop music?" This is what Rob Gordon, the main character of the novel and movie *High Fidelity*, wonders.

Imagine your life without music, going through every experience all by yourself – not only joyful situations but also those having to do with broken hearts, rejection, pain, misery and loss. I cannot help but wonder: Do we really know the crucial role music plays in our lives? Are we fully aware of the fact that absolutely everyone has the ability to "take a sad song and make it better"?

To illustrate this idea one only needs to look, for example, at music therapy, a well-established healthcare profession that makes use of music to treat physical, emotional, cognitive and social disorders in individuals of all ages. Music has been shown to affect portions of the brain. Thus, this therapy relies on the ability of music to influence the patients' emotions and social interactions positively. Music therapy interventions can be designed to promote wellness, manage stress, alleviate pain, express feelings, enhance memory, improve communication and aid physical rehabilitation.

Furthermore, various musicians have found music to be a key element to get over difficulty. A clear example of this is Ludwig van Beethoven, one of the most respected and influential composers of all times. He is known to have had to go through hardship in a number of aspects of his life: first, he had to overcome economic problems nearly his entire life; he also had romantic difficulties as it was hard for him to find a loving partner to marry; finally, he had to endure progressive hearing loss until he became totally deaf. However, his plight did not prevent him from composing; on the contrary, music seems to have saved him.

Moreover, adolescents appear to see music as a sort of emotional haven. Could it be argued that teenagers are keener on music than people from other age groups precisely because it helps them overcome the difficulties they constantly encounter in this hard stage of their lives? Does music help teenagers to "take their sad *life* and make it better"?

To sum up, I would like to express my deep conviction that music is a vital tool in order to get over troublesome circumstances in life. Music has the power to help us to turn a heartbreaking or tough situation into a powerful force that inspires us to become better, worthier human beings. Music is to the soul what exercise is to the body.

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